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U.S.-CAEF REGIONAL ALUMNI CONFERENCE

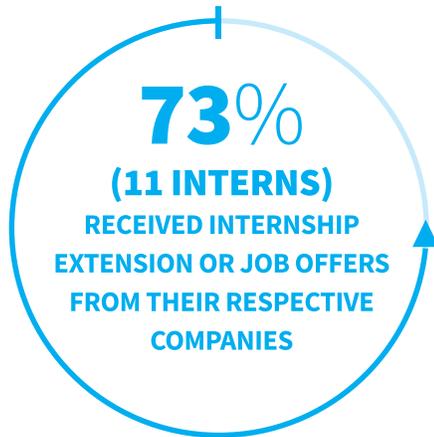
SEVARA TADZHIBAEVA
PRESIDENT | U.S.-CAEF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM: U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation (U.S.-CAEF) Enterprise Student Fellowship Program is an undergraduate business education scholarship program for academically gifted 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.



U.S.-CAEF REGIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



GAINING CAREER EXPOSURE

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

Despite many businesses still operating remotely, U.S.-CAEF carried out the Regional Internship Program.

While many internships were remote or had a remote component, the interns found great value in their professional experiences. They took on positions related to their majors and performed tasks from conducting marketing research for a new product to analyzing the business and investment environment in Central Asian republics. By taking part in the program, interns were able to gain real-life exposure, grow their professional knowledge, develop soft skills, build important professional connections, and determine if they are in the right career field.

“This internship definitely helped me shape my career interests. As a result, I decided to change my concentration to data science/ analytics. It is a growing field.”



— **Yiman Altynbek uulu**
Intern | MAPS
Kyrgyzstan

“Absolutely. I started considering QA [quality assurance] testing as my possible future career. As well, since I was mainly conducting analytics and working with big data, I am also considering this field for my future career.”



— **Lidiya Yagodina**
Intern | Davinci Consulting
Uzbekistan

“I understand now that I want to focus on finance more, but I need to fill in the gaps in accounting standards in the nearest future”



— **Alua Chyntemirova**
Intern | Freedom Finance
Kazakhstan

15 AUCA & KIMEP UNIVERSITY FELLOWS INTERINED AT 12 COMPANIES IN CENTRAL ASIA



KAZAKHSTAN:

- Chaplin Cinemas
- Grohe
- Freedom Finance



KYRGYZSTAN:

- Andromedia
- Coca-Cola
- MAPS



TAJIKISTAN:

- Aga Khan Foundation
- Arvand Bank
- Coca-Cola
- Crowe ACG
- TajRupt



UZBEKISTAN:

- DaVinci Management Consulting

U.S.-CAEF REGIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

CONTINUED

“I understood that with the era of technology many operations may be done by programs, so there will be no need for accountants. That is why I will try to learn more about data science and artificial intelligence.”



—**Farangis Mirzobekova**
Intern | Coca-Cola
Tajikistan

“I have learned that to become a finance officer I need to acquire more knowledge. Therefore, my main goal for the next academic year is to take more classes related to finance and audit. Right after my internship, I started to take Coursera courses on accounting and finance”



—**Gulnoz Faizakova**
Intern | Aga Khan
Foundation
Tajikistan

All interns unanimously named a supportive environment in the workplace as the most rewarding experience. They appreciated that their colleagues and supervisors trusted them with real, hands-on projects which boosted their confidence and motivated them to work harder and contribute to the overall success of their companies. The interns found particularly rewarding the experiences which resulted in benefits for customers and co-workers.

“The most valuable aspect of my internship is the people. The motto of our office is “ONE TEAM”. This phrase goes beyond a particular department: it united all workers, representatives, interns, and everyone who was engaged in bringing the best output to the Coca-Cola Company. As an intern, I expected some hierarchy. However, the colleagues in the marketing department treated me as an equal, and it was the best experience ever. Such trust in my professionalism and individuality made me believe in myself, and my real abilities”



—**Aisuluu Ryspaeva**
whose supervisor was
Guliza Almazbek kyzy,
U.S.-CAEF alumna
Kyrgyzstan

“Although everyone was busy doing their own thing, any time I could turn to my supervisors for help, I always got it. In such environment I felt that people trusted me, which not only increased responsibility, but also the desire to work for the benefit of the team.”



—**Dastan Baktybekov**
Intern | Andromedia
Kyrgyzstan



“One of the key factors of improvement and development is learning from others. Although some people might have a lower position, their experience and knowledge should never be underestimated. In order to successfully lead a business, a manager should understand in detail what work is being done by each employee, thus the full picture would be seen and decisions would be more effective.”

—**Imran Alimov**
Intern | TajRupt
Tajikistan

**PROMOTED TO
CHIEF OF STAFF
DESPITE HIS
YOUNG AGE**

U.S.-CAEF REGIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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Similarly, the interns’ supervisors found great value in the fellows’ contributions to their respective companies and expressed their interest in hosting more U.S.-CAEF fellows in the future.

“Dastan was responsible for creating new ideas for the design of websites and apps. Dastan was very helpful in this because he is a person of the new generation, which means that he knows all the trends. The combination of his creativity and our experience made our clients very happy.”



— **Bahtiyar Moldakunov**
Dastan Baktybekov’s
supervisor, at Andromedia

“Eradzh is a quick learner who has showed all his strengths during this internship. He has proved his integrity, accountability, and passion for the work he was assigned to.”



— **Mohinav Amonulloeva**
Finance Executive
(U.S.-CAEF alumna)
Eradzh Nasriddinov’s
supervisor at, Coca-Cola
Tajikistan

“Zevar proved to be a very purposeful and communicative person. In the course of completing assignments, she also showed that she understands the essence of the work very quickly and performed the tasks with great responsibility. In general, Zevar is a very promising student, and I think that she has great chances to become a high-class specialist in the future.”



— **Sadriddin Sharifov**
Head of Banking Sector
Crowe ACG

“Yiman did a lot of work on creating a database, which we have already begun to use in our work.”



— **Nazgul Chilek**
Yiman Altynbek uulu’s
supervisor at MAPS

“Since the very beginning, I have been impressed by Dariya’s drive and dedication to her work. She could quickly identify a problem, devise an appropriate way of investigation, and provide a rational solution. Dariya started her way in GROHE from Project Department Assistant position. Recently, she was promoted to Junior Project Manager in Kazakhstan. Now, she fully regulates work with partners on the territory of Kazakhstan.”



— **Zarina Keneskanova**
Dariya Mustafinova’s
supervisor at Grohe

The interns are grateful to the U.S. Department of State, the U.S.-CAEF Program, alumni, and their internship hosts who provided them with the opportunity to develop professionally despite the challenges caused by the pandemic.



FELLOWS SEEK EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

U.S.-CAEF fellows have shown the drive and passion to develop professionally and acquire experience outside of their university and U.S.-CAEF program's offerings whether it is from actual job experience, volunteer work, or interning at a company. These experiences have served them as a platform to establish critical networking connections, enabled them to determine their career trajectories and taught them important skills that they can transfer to their future jobs upon graduation. Fellows shared their experiences in their own words in the passages below.



DIVING INTO THE WORLD OF CYBERSECURITY

BY **OYBEK TURAEV**
AUCA-2020-UZBEKISTAN

During the summer, I decided to pursue my professional interest in Cybersecurity by taking part in an internship with one of the best companies in India, Verzeo. India is one of the top ten countries that is the most advanced in cybersecurity.

During two months of intensive yet effective classes, our experienced mentor introduced important modern concepts related to cybersecurity, and shared real-life examples of how hackers can find vulnerabilities, and counter-measures to avoid them. This internship exposed me to many aspects of the broad field of cybersecurity, and provided specific guidelines on how to further my knowledge and expertise in the field. The internship involved many practical components, including complex projects that shaped our knowledge and allowed us to gain hands-on experience. I put all my effort into learning the concepts to the best of my ability and worked on projects outside my regular workload to fulfill my professional goals.

I am so pleased to have gained this experience, and that I was able to expand my network with experts in this field. I am confident about what my next steps will be in this field, and that I will be a promising professional candidate in the future who can help my community develop cybersecurity at an advanced level.



DISCOVERING MY PASSION FOR FINANCE

BY **BEGIMAI AZIZBEKOVA**
AUCA-2020-KYRGYZSTAN

Over the summer, I was able to gain significant work experience in the analytical department of Own Snap. Every day, more than 50,000 people, primarily stockholders of various companies interested in investment, visit the website for the latest news about investments. My primary responsibility was based on the survey of the stock market and the growth of tokens in the cryptocurrency market. Upon analyzing the stocks of trending companies, I released the latest news on the Own Snap website. Throughout my work, I also learned various strategies to understand trends of some of the largest stock exchanges, like the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and NASDAQ. In addition, I learned how different cryptocurrency transactions support national currencies and exchanges. My education in Economics, provided by the wonderful professors of AUCA, helped me make a smooth transition to my work experience. It was a great pleasure to be surrounded by young professionals in this field and expand my knowledge in various aspects of finance. My work motivated me to develop financial literacy among the greater population and make investment methods more accessible in Kyrgyzstan for people's future well-being. I will try my best to use the work experience in future internships, and to successfully pass the CFA test. Thanks to this unforgettable experience, I enhanced my economic and financial knowledge by investigating the money flow in the stock market and crypto charts.

FELLOWS SEEK EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

CONTINUED



BUILDING THE SMM EXPERIENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

BY **BAKTYGUL TAZHAMATOVA**
AUCA-2020-KYRGYZSTAN

This summer, I was selected to be a Social Media Manager (SMM) for Summer Camp America 2021 in Isfana, Batken. Summer Camp America in Kyrgyzstan aims to build community with rural, sometimes isolated communities in Kyrgyzstan and to provide them with unique and interesting opportunities (like going to summer camp!). The goal of Summer Camp America is to provide a fun and interesting camp experience, challenge participants' attitudes towards traditional gender roles and norms, strengthen inter-regional understanding within Kyrgyzstan and raise participants' curiosity in pursuing learning and educational opportunities. The SMM skills I gained through interning for the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association as an SMM helped me a lot during the camp. I was very passionate about my job and wanted to capture the real emotions of our campers. I enjoyed working with kids and I was very happy that I was able to contribute to their development and spend time with them, even as an SMM. They were very excited about the activities we organized for them and I hope one day I might see some of them become U.S.-CAEF fellows! This experience was very meaningful for me. I was amazed by the atmosphere of the camp, nature, people, and the culture of Batken. My team inspired me everyday with their attitude and passion for working with the campers.

ENHANCING SKILLS THROUGH YOUTH PROGRAM-2021

BY **DANIEL TAIROV**
AUCA-2019-KYRGYZSTAN

I was recently selected as one of 18 participants of 'Youth Program-2021, an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to boost the professional skills of young people by providing online and in-person events through social media and other marketing efforts. I have been primarily working with the Acceleration Laboratories team involved in inputting QR codes at various popular sites around Osh, the goal of which is to promote tourism in the city.

We also take part in weekly training seminars to improve our professional skills. The program has been a great way to put some of the knowledge I have learned in my classes at AUCA into practice through real-world situations. I also appreciate that the program encourages participants to perform a wide variety of tasks, allowing them to discover new skillsets and narrow their professional interests.



INTERNSHIP WITH COCA-COLA IN NAMANGAN

BY **BEKJON MAKHMUDOV**
AUCA-2019-UZBEKISTAN

In the beginning of the summer, I began an internship with the Coca-Cola Business Unit in Namangan, Uzbekistan in the control management systems department. For the two-month duration of the internship, I worked on a regular full-time basis, from 8 am to 5 pm. My department was responsible for researching and implementing international and local standards for management, food production, safety, and environmental protection.

During my internship, I learned about many international and local standards and their purposes. Some of the objectives of position were to translate, arrange, and prepare documents according my to the standards and requirements. I also had the chance to analyze the whole production process of Coca-Cola drinks and become familiar with the machinery and the composition of the products. I also learned about the history of the products and about the international chain of companies that work on Coca-Cola production. With the assistance of my supervisor, I worked on researching the standardization processes of the software field. All in all, having this internship experience at a large international company provided me with a wealth of professional experience in various fields related to food production and management.

FELLOWS SEEK EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

CONTINUED



LEARNING FROM IT PROFESSIONALS IN TAJIKISTAN

BY **BAKHTOVAR UMAROV**
AUCA-2020-TAJIKISTAN

After my freshman year, I set a clear goal of completing an internship as an IOS developer. In order to accomplish this goal, I took an online course in the Swift programming language.

My work paid off when I was hired as an intern for Livo, one of the best IT companies in Dushanbe. In the beginning, it was challenging for me to work with new software platforms. Then, I decided to take more online courses on IOS development to complement the knowledge and skills I was gaining at my internship.

At Livo, I was a member of the Mobile and Web Development team. Before Livo, I had never been interned as a programmer, so it was really exciting to explore how the IT company works and functions. My mentor was a middle IOS developer who taught me a lot during my internship. It was a great steppingstone into my future career as a programmer, where I learned how to build an application from scratch. Moreover, I improved my problem-solving skills and gained experience at a reputable company that provides valuable business services for their clients.

Although I was part of the web development team, I also tried to familiarize myself with other departments as well. I am grateful that I was able to expand my network of talented IT professionals in Tajikistan.



NETWORKING WITH FINANCE STUDENTS ACROSS THE WORLD

BY **KHUSAN RAVSHANOV**
AUCA-2021-UZBEKISTAN

I recently joined Financial Pills, an international student finance society in which members network across various elite universities around the world. As Financial Pills members, we write and publish articles about current events in finance from the perspective of international students. Members have the opportunity to learn about different sectors and gain exposure to new ways of thinking. We know how important it is in the business world to establish new connections and experience new cultures. By working in teams of students from different target universities, members of the Financial Pills International Student Finance Society will have a networking advantage moving forward in their careers. The team members in each group will be the students securing Internship spots at the world's most prestigious banks and companies. Members and readers are given the opportunity to receive and share advice from the world's most successful undergraduate students. We are unique in that we encourage writers to express opinions and discuss the environmental and moral impact of the financial events and opportunities at hand. In doing so, we are creating a generation of conscious investors. Our target reading audience consists of motivated high school and undergraduate students interested in finance. By following our articles, readers can learn about the experiences our members have interning at highly regarded firms and companies.



CONTRIBUTING TO THE POVERTY ELIMINATION PROGRAM

BY **SAVSANGUL MAMADLOIQOVA**
KIMEP-2018-TAJIKISTAN

Beginning in June, I was selected to participate in an online internship at Poverty Elimination Program, which is part of AKDN (Aga Khan Development Network), and aims to eliminate poverty on a global scale. During the internship, I worked with the Learning & Development Director and learned how humanitarian organizations are working towards poverty reduction. My tasks included assisting with preparing volunteer packages, toolkits, and personnel documents to sign, and attending meetings with Poverty Elimination Leads in different countries.

Moreover, I facilitated a Financial Literacy and Budgeting course for COPE volunteers around the world, and analyzed the course, adapted it to suit Central Asian culture & contexts, and ensured its universal applicability.

I am really grateful to have worked as an intern for Poverty Elimination Program, as it opened my eyes to how international nonprofits assist economically vulnerable societies with necessary skills and resources to help them become financially stable and independent.

FELLOWS SEEK EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

CONTINUED



SUMMER CAMP AMERICA

BY **FARUKH FARKHATOV**
AUCA-2020-KYRGYZSTAN

Recently, I applied for a counselor position with Summer Camp America. The camp took place in the mountainous surroundings of Isfana, Kyrgyzstan. As a counselor, my job was to create a friendly atmosphere for kids to feel free and enjoy every moment of their time at camp. As it turned out, our camp experience was a bit different from that in previous years. The number of campers was almost half what it normally was, due to the COVID-19 policies. As a result, each counselor only had up to nine campers per group. I was excited to start working with children because kids are very sincere and they often provide fun and entertaining conversation! I consider myself lucky to have been paired with the oldest campers (12 to 14 year-olds) because we got to discuss many different topics, including our favorite movies and the education system in our country. During our discussions, I was reminded that we can learn a lot more from kids than people often think. One of my 12-year-old campers commented, “Shrek is about love. Imagine being an ogre and turning into a human for the sake of love.” Everyone laughed, but I sat there for a minute trying to understand why I had never thought about that before. I also noticed the difference between kids from Bishkek and kids from other regions of the country; kids from the city tend to have more, but take it for granted. Meanwhile, kids from villages in Batken often possess a strong will to learn and improve, but lack proper guidance and resources. This fact empowered me to put my energy and enthusiasm into our drama, English, art, and baseball classes. I also sometimes taught guitar to orphan children sharing the camp with us.



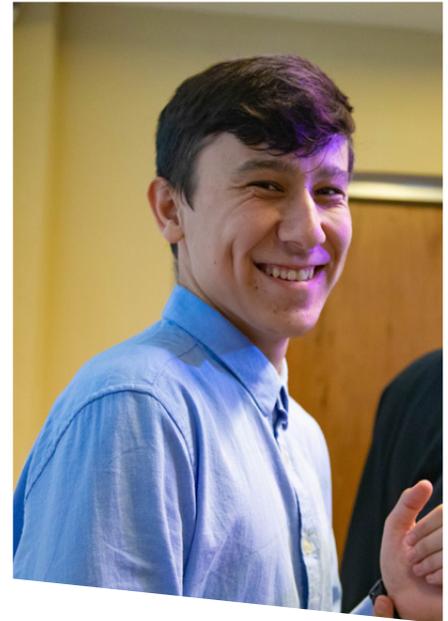
INTERNSHIP WITH BEELINE

BY **YLYAS GARABAYEV**
KIMEP-2018-TURKMENISTAN

In early April 2021, a friend of mine told me about an internship program called Digital Generation by Beeline, which was seeking inexperienced but enthusiastic individuals. At that time, I had just finished my first year pursuing the Bachelor of Information Systems in Business (BISB) major at KIMEP and was looking for the chance to implement my skills and knowledge, and try myself at solving real-life cases. After submitting the application and supporting documents and completing a couple interviews, I was hired as a Product Management Intern for Service of New Products in Beeline. My coordinator wanted me to dive into this field step-by-step, so I started first by conducting some research and reading professional instructions, and continued with involving myself in different projects within the department.

Since I started, I have continued to work on improving myself, and recently took on my first solo project. My tasks are mostly related to connecting different departments and involving them in the case, finding and contacting necessary vendors, and creating price analysis and marketing strategies for the products.

I advise everyone to seek opportunities to improve their skills in handling real-life situations, and to not hold back due to lack of experience, since everyone can find the right place for them to start their career!



HOW ONE JOB LED TO ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY

BY **MUHAMMAD BOYMATOV**
AUCA-2018-TAJIKISTAN

This summer, I had the opportunity to work as a project manager at two major banks in Tajikistan, Arvand and Alif. I was first promoted as a project manager at Arvand Bank, and focused on their mobile banking application. We worked on improving the services that they provide through the app and developed a new feature called Overdraft for its users. In four months, we managed to develop and launch this product for internal testing.

After gaining four months of work experience at Arvand Bank, I was invited to join Alif Bank as a project manager. Alif Bank made me an offer I couldn't refuse, where I would get to work on a project with over 500,000 users in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. I accepted their offer, and now I am currently working with highly experienced developers on one of the most downloaded finance apps.

Everyday, we work to create new features, face many problems and find solutions to those problems, which has in turn provided me with valuable professional experience and the opportunity to grow day by day.

LEARNING THROUGH YOUTH PROGRAMS IN CENTRAL ASIA



JOINING CENTRAL ASIA YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

BY **IMRAN ALIMOV-KIMEP-2018-TAJIKISTAN**

For the past month, I have been a member of the Youth Leadership Academy. Youth Leadership Academy is supported by the Civil Society Support Program (CSSP) in Central Asia, a five-year initiative implemented by Eurasia Foundation and funded by USAID.

I was very lucky to pass a highly competitive selection process to become a participant of the academy; the program has an acceptance rate of about 20 percent. From Eurasia Foundation's website, "Central Asia Youth Leadership Academy (CAYLA) unites young leaders from Central Asia determined to drive positive, lasting change in their communities. Over the course of five months, CAYLA participants complete a rigorous interactive e-learning series in social entrepreneurship, creative and critical thinking, project development and management, emotional intelligence, and public speaking. Courses are led by some of Central Asia's top civil society experts." (Eurasia Foundation, 2020).

For me, this experience has provided a great opportunity to fill in gaps in my knowledge of leadership, and develop some really important soft skills. Moreover, this program has helped me to build a diverse international network of highly motivated peers who come from a variety of backgrounds. While participating in the program has been challenging at times because I am also taking fall courses and working two part-time jobs, I have been able to make it work by sacrificing my down time when needed. Despite the difficulty managing my time, I am very glad I decided to apply for the academy. From this experience, I have learned a very important lesson: one should not miss great opportunities because of fear of potential challenges. Rather, this should serve as motivation to leave one's comfort zone.

ACADEMY OF YOUNG LEADERS SPONSORED BY IFES

BY **BEGAIYM BUZURMANKULOVA**
AUCA-2021-KYRGYZSTAN

In August, I participated in a training called "Academy of Young Leaders" organized by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

During the training, I learned about anti-corruption actions, different types of corruption, and the ins and outs of the electoral process itself. I was also able to enhance my leadership skills while working in teams and carrying out tasks that were assigned by the coordinators. Furthermore, I was able to increase my network and meet other participants at the training.



LEARNING THROUGH YOUTH PROGRAMS IN CENTRAL ASIA

CONTINUED

GAINING RICH PERSPECTIVES THROUGH DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

BY SAMAR KANATOV-AUCA-2020-KYRGYZSTAN

In addition to completing an internship over the summer, I participated in several international projects, which varied greatly in their topics.

At the beginning of August, I took part in “Aral Sea” summer school held in Aral, Kazakhstan. The school aimed to unite young professionals and enthusiasts in Central Asia around the largest environmental crises facing our region. The project was hosted by my internship site, Central Asian Youth Water Network, and Deutch-Kazakh University. After this experience, I was offered to participate in the Youth Leadership Program of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Almaty. I took part in the program’s three-day 6th module dedicated to environmental challenges, where I presented about my internship site and Aral summer school.

Later in August, I traveled to Moscow to take part in an International Youth Camp called “Dialogue,” organized by European Council and Youth Russia. The week-long camp, held in the Kaluga region of Russia, gathered 100 young activists from more than 20 countries from around the globe to learn more about the intricacies of intercultural communication.

Finally, in September, I was involved in the 5th International Student Forum of Asian universities in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. The forum addressed a wide range of issues and emphasized active involvement of students and their cooperation on an international level.

Participating in events of this scale contributed significantly to the development of my international competency and opened new prospects for networking and exchanging experiences and ideas. Indeed, they also provided the added benefit of traveling and making friends from around the world.



FELLOWS PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING AT AUCA

The Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC) at AUCA is a highly regarded tutoring service utilized by many students at the university. WARC tutors are typically among the highest achieving students, and many U.S.-CAEF fellows have been selected to serve their peers through this respected student organization. The WARC team is also known for its family-like atmosphere and distinct camaraderie. **This year, a total of six U.S.-CAEF fellows were selected to become WARC tutors** – **Aiana Rysbekova** and **Zebojon Rasulova**, and juniors **Daniel Tairov**, **Matlubakhon Fozilova**, **Gulnoz Faizakova**, and **Dina Mamadjanova**. Fellows work as math, economics, accounting and writing tutors.

“WARC really helped me improve my knowledge in Economics, Writing, Mathematics and Accounting during my freshman and sophomore years. As a senior student of Economics, I decided to give back and help other students to actively learn Economics. The selection for WARC is competitive as students who demonstrate academic proficiency in the course have a chance to be shortlisted. I was honored to pass all the steps from application to interview. Working with students and being able to assist them makes me happy. I try to create a comfortable atmosphere for students so that they would not hesitate to ask questions. Working at the WARC is also beneficial for me as it helps me revise materials for my current courses. The WARC administration and my colleagues are all professionals and working with them increases my productivity. In addition, I also try to help current fellows outside the WARC such as my U.S.-CAEF mentee **Farakhnoz Mirzoeva** in Microeconomics.”



— **Zebojon Rasulova**



As a freshman at AUCA, **Gulnoz Faizakova** frequently took advantage of the WARC services. In August, almost two years later, she became a WARC tutor herself! Gulnoz writes that the ‘Writing to Teach You: Theory and Practice of Composition Pedagogy’ class at AUCA, taught by Dr. Nicolas Walmsley, boosted her confidence as a writer and improving her tutoring skills. In the short time she has been a tutor, Gulnoz has gained valuable insight about how to effectively support her peers in their writing goals. She looks forward to a challenging but exciting journey with WARC and hopes the experience may even help her become a professional tutor!

EXPANDING CULTURAL HORIZONS THROUGH EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

U.S.-CAEF fellows take advantage of various opportunities to expand their academic and cultural horizons through their engagement in different exchange opportunities offering real world connections. Fellows find such experiences rewarding and valuable for their professional and personal growth as evidenced by the stories below.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN THE U.S.

BY SURAYYO KHAYRULLAEVA-AUCA-2020-UZBEKISTAN

I was chosen as a FLEX Program finalist in 2020, and due to the pandemic, my FLEX counterparts and I did not have the chance to go to the U.S. as scheduled. However, the following year, the U.S. Embassy was able to send us to the U.S. through a special program called the Uzbekistan Youth Leadership Program.

The Youth Leadership Program (YLP), sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, is a one month, action-packed project that gives 17 students the opportunity to participate in civic education, leadership, project planning, and environmental sustainability workshops while also sharing and raising awareness of Uzbek culture with U.S. audiences. During the program, the other participants and I spent one week in Washington, DC, where we attended civic education workshops led by American Councils staff. I experienced a totally different lifestyle and academic environment there. For the remaining three weeks, from August 2-22, the Foundation for International Understanding Through Students (FIUTS) hosted us in Seattle at the University of Washington campus.

Over the course of those three weeks, we learned so much about leadership development, community project planning, environmental sustainability and justice, cross-cultural exchange, and civic engagement. In addition to learning about American culture, one of the most important parts of the program for me was developing more confidence and learning self-management and independence. I also really enjoyed experiencing the U.S., and seeing how people there are full of passion for life and love helping each other. They often say thank you to the bus driver for every bus trip, and smile to passersby even though they do not know each other. I also appreciate the diversity of the cultures and people there. I am so grateful to everyone who made this program possible during a global pandemic.



EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

CONTINUED

A SEMESTER IN POZNAN

BY AIANA RYSBEKOVA-AUCA-2018-KYRGYZSTAN

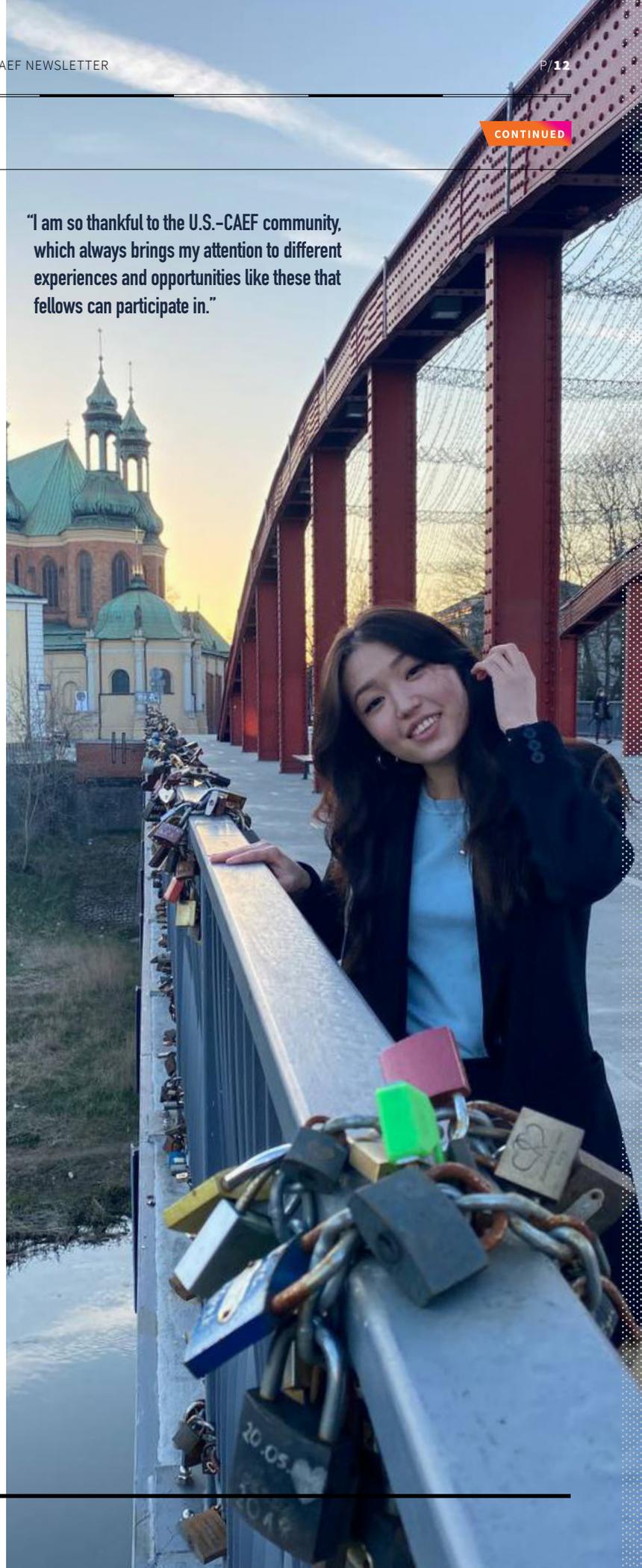
I was exceptionally lucky to be selected as an Erasmus+ scholarship recipient to study at Poznan University of Economics and Business for the spring 2021 semester, where I took classes in finance and business analytics, and met highly qualified professionals.

The courses were very practical, and I learned about different platforms where I could strengthen my knowledge and skills. For example, we took part in a simulation game where we ran our own fictitious businesses. In addition, I had the chance to take several master's level classes in International Management, where the topics were more complex and specific. This boosted my confidence and perfectly supplemented the knowledge that I had already obtained at AUCA. It also gave me a better understanding of whether I would like to continue my studies in the field I had been pursuing.

Overall, the exchange semester provided an amazing safe environment to discover new things and set clear, attainable goals for my future. What is more, I also got a unique opportunity to not only study in one of the best universities in Europe, but also to explore new cultures, history and people in the European Union.

After my exchange semester, I was selected to participate in a training program offered through Erasmus+ in Smolyan, Bulgaria in the beginning of July. Around 25 representatives from 5 European countries gathered to learn more about entrepreneurship and how local Smolyan NGOs are improving the city with their social projects. I was the only representative from Central Asia and for me, this training provided me with a global perspective of the EU economy. During the week-long program, we visited different local businesses and spoke with the mayor of the city, who explained to us how the Smolyan government collaborates with the local people. I learned that Bulgaria is making huge strides in its social and economic development, and many parts of Central Asia could learn from them. Thus, this project was important for me to see how we can make changes in Kyrgyzstan through social projects and small businesses.

"I am so thankful to the U.S.-CAEF community, which always brings my attention to different experiences and opportunities like these that fellows can participate in."



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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



MAKER SPACE BOOTCAMP

BY **ABDULAMIR ABDULMAJIDOV**-AUCA-2021-TAJIKISTAN

In May 2021, I was selected to take part in Maker Space Bootcamp in Dushanbe, a program focused on STEAM education (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math).

We learned about the impact of technology on our societies and how STEAM education is becoming popular. By the end of the program, I was really inspired and came up with the idea to benefit my community through sharing the knowledge I gained from that program. Thus, I decided to organize a project called “STEAM PROJECT” which took place at the American Space Khorog, where I have been volunteering since 2020. The project lasted for three days, and was intended primarily for female participants. Some girls in our society are not interested in information technology because they think (or are told) that it is too difficult for them and that they would not succeed in that industry. Thus, I was motivated to change people’s way of thinking in my community by conducting the STEAM PROJECT.

Prior to the start of the project, I developed a curriculum that included interactive presentations about STEAM education and softs skills, activities related to soft skills and a tour of the Maker Space of American Space Khorog. Moreover, I invited a speaker who talked about the importance of technology for the development of our country. The main goal of the project was to motivate young girls to start learning information technology and dispel negative impressions they may have of the field. As a result, the project was a great success. While perhaps not all participants will be motivated to pursue IT jobs in the future, I am sure that those who participated in the project now have a better understanding of the IT sphere and the potential job opportunities it can provide.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

CONTINUED

SPREADING INFORMATION ABOUT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ISFARA

BY **MATLUBAKHON FOZILOVA**
AUCA-2019-TAJIKISTAN

A team of three other girls from AUCA and I organized a two-day training in a rural area of Tajikistan, Isfara. The training, which was inspired by a similar one conducted in Khujand earlier in the year, was aimed to help young leaders from Isfara to learn more about opportunities for studying abroad. Even though many of the participants lacked financial independence and information about study abroad opportunities, they were surprisingly engaged in the activities that we organized for the training. The event helped me realize that despite any bad situations or hard times, if a person is hardworking enough, they can achieve everything. During the training, we taught the participants how to fill out applications, write motivational letters and write letters to request financial aid. In addition, we informed students about the U.S.-CAEF Program, AUCA, KIMEP and many other universities to which they can apply. Participants really enjoyed the training, and now the other organizers and I are continuing to mentor them on the application processes. We are thrilled that many of the students have seen positive results, some of whom have already enrolled in AUCA and other universities outside Tajikistan. Seeing their success has motivated us even more, and we hope to continue the project and serve even more students and regions across Tajikistan, and perhaps even abroad. It has been a really exciting journey.

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH ART ACTIVISM

BY **FARANGIS MIRZOBKOVA**
AUCA-2019-TAJIKISTAN

I had the chance to participate in Art Activism School, organized by the Office of Civil Freedoms of Tajikistan. Throughout the program, the other participants and I learned about different types of art and how to use it to promote human rights, gender equality, freedom of speech and many other important social justice topics. The program provided a great chance to improve my writing and poetry skills, which I can use in the future to produce art pieces to raise awareness about societal issues and propose solutions. I participated in workshops conducted by famous journalists, designers, and directors, who shared advice about becoming an art activist.

Being a part of this school helped me to expand my world view, improve my networking skills and learn how to channel my interests in a unique and productive way. I am really grateful to have discovered that I can use my writing skills to benefit society as a human rights activist.

As a result of our work in this program, the artwork that the other members and I created will be featured in an art exhibition this fall.



SINGING FOR CHARITY

BY **BAKTYGUL KERIMOVA**
AUCA-2021-KYRGYZSTAN

I am a member of a youth music group called 'Youth Harmony'; over the summer, we arranged a live music charity evening two times a month for the residents and tourists in our city. After a lot of thought about where to donate the proceeds from the events, we unanimously decided to donate the money to a center for children with autism, located near our city.

About 40 people attended each charity evening, and we raised approximately 8,000 soms, all of which we transferred to the center and parents of the children. With the funds, the center and the parents of the students were able to purchase books about social development, toys, and children's books, all of which can be quite expensive. Some members of our group were able to go to the children's center and personally deliver the money, and they reported that they had a good time. I am glad that I could be part of this impactful group.



ALUMNI AFFAIRS

REGIONAL ALUMNI CONFERENCE 2021

We are thrilled to report that despite the unprecedented challenges presented by Covid-19, the U.S.-CAEF Regional Alumni Conference 2021 (RAC 21) took place on October 2-3, 2021 and was widely regarded as a tremendous success. RAC21, the first-of-its-kind hybrid conference funded by the U.S. Department of State brought together U.S.-CAEF alumni representing all five republics of Central Asia, U.S. Embassies, and key business communities in the region, served as an impetus for expanding regional and international economic cooperation, and advancing the professional growth of the members of the U.S.-CAEF community.

There are currently **306 U.S.-CAEF alumni**, representing some of the most energetic, innovative, and successful young business people in the region. Many now hold key positions as financial managers, investment advisors, marketing professionals, auditors, IT specialists, and business consultants at leading companies.



SONATA N. COULTER

DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION
& CHARGE D'AFFAIRS AT
THE U.S. EMBASSY IN BISHKEK

ABOUT 20% OF ALUMNI HAVE FOUNDED OR CO-FOUNDED NEW BUSINESSES CONTRIBUTING TO CENTRAL ASIA'S ECONOMIC HEALTH

ALUMNI AFFAIRS

SURPASSING EXPECTATIONS

Over **260** individuals registered for RAC21, and the number of participants is assumed to be even greater, as not all participants of the online portion of the conference registered prior to the start of the event.

While the main, live events were arranged for 75 alumni in Bishkek at the Jannat Hotel, the conference was also streamed via Zoom, allowing other participants from around the globe to tune in. Organizers coordinated viewing parties in Almaty, Kazakhstan at the Dostyk Hotel, and at Serena Hotel in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where 15 and 25 alumni were in attendance, respectively. Attendance likely would have been even greater at each viewing, were it not for travel restrictions due to Covid-19 and ongoing border issues in Central Asia. In addition to members of the U.S.-CAEF community, alumni of other U.S. government-funded programs like UGRAD, FLEX, SUSI, Muskie, Global Village, Fulbright, and TechGirl also joined the conference online.

The conference program included meaningful networking opportunities, a variety of panel discussions, and keynote speeches pertaining to post-graduate education, entrepreneurship, and opportunities in the age of COVID which are relevant to the alumni's concerns and interests. The conference was abundantly successful in achieving its primary goal- to cultivate the exchange of experiences and ideas between program alumni, U.S. Embassies, and Central Asian business communities.



CONTINUED

As evidenced by feedback from alumni, the conference also helped them develop a deeper appreciation for the U.S.-CAEF program, uplifted and inspired them to grow together, and motivated them to establish a sustainable, independent alumni organization that could help accelerate the pace of positive changes in their communities.

“The conference overachieved its initial goals, it did serve the purpose, it sparked us, connected us, it transformed the way we perceived the program and motivated us which, in my opinion, is the most important thing. I am so happy that the initiative [establishing an independent alumni organization] has already started and some seeds have already been planted. We will do our best to carry this initiative forward and make it sustainable. We will make this happen because this program has transformed and keeps transforming our lives. I am so grateful and happy to reunite with my U.S.-CAEF family. I would like to thank the U.S. Department of State, American Councils, all sponsors and volunteers who made this possible”

— **Zhamilia Klycheva**
RESEARCH ASSISTANT & PHD CANDIDATE
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY
CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY
CLAREMONT, CA.

ALUMNI AFFAIRS

CONTINUED

Alumna from Kazakhstan, **Dinara Atantaeyva**, Senior Manager, Economics and Development Department, Samruk-Kazyna, shared the following highlights of RAC21,

“First of all, I would like to thank the U.S. government, American Councils, U.S.-CAEF, and the U.S.-CAEF Alumni team for organizing this one-of-a-kind conference for the U.S.-CAEF community, where program alumni from all over the world had a chance to reconnect.

The format and content of the conference were very well-structured and contained plenty of useful insights and tips from alumni and guests on such important topics as post-graduate program scholarships, entrepreneurship, startup business strategies and investments. What is perhaps the most important thing about the conference is the fact that all those insights and tips were derived from many personal success stories of our alumni. The experience shared by our alumni is something valuable that I would not be able to gain anywhere else.

The conference has become a great source of inspiration for me, and I believe for all of us. It is wonderful to watch your former university classmates succeed in business and make our U.S.-CAEF community more



powerful, diverse, and dynamic. Being a member of such a wonderful professional community motivates me to achieve higher goals and contribute more to my community.

I truly enjoyed every second of this conference. It reminded me about one of the best moments in my life when I won a U.S.-CAEF scholarship and received access to a high-quality education and lots of opportunities during my study and afterwards in my life.”

ALUMNI AFFAIRS

CONTINUED

NOTABLE GUESTS & KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



In addition to the hundreds of U.S.-CAEF and other U.S. government-funded program alumni that participated in the conference, numerous distinguished guests lent their time and knowledge to the activities and presentations that took place throughout RAC21.



Sonata N. Coulter, Deputy Chief of Mission and Charge d'affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, provided opening remarks for the event on October 2. Also representing the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, **Veronica Elkins**, Cultural Affairs Officer, offered closing remarks. Other notable guests from the Embassy included **Shayna Cram**, Public Affairs Officer; and **Abai Iliiazov**, Alumni Coordinator, both of whom serve as grant officers for the U.S.-CAEF Program.

U.S. Embassy representatives from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan were also able to join the hybrid events in Almaty and Dushanbe, respectively. **Chad Kinnear**, Assistant Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Almaty, attended the event in Kazakhstan, and **Darren Thies**, Public Affairs Officer, and **Shefali Agrawal**, Information Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, attended the event in Tajikistan.

In their welcoming remarks, **Margaret Grieve**, Vice Chair of the U.S.-CAEF Board of Directors; **Paul Hamlin**, Program Officer, Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation, USAID, **Dr. David P. Patton**, President and CEO, American Councils; **Olesia Gardner**, Country Director, American Councils in Kyrgyzstan; and **Sevara Tadzhibaeva**, President of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association and one of the key organizers of the conference, expressed their admiration for alumni who have become socially responsible business leaders and changemakers.



“What continues to stand out most about U.S.-CAEF alumni is not just business acumen, entrepreneurship, and career success, but also the deeply held belief in ethics, fairness and decency, and the remarkable commitment to helping less-advantaged communities in Central Asia. The actions and resilience of U.S.-CAEF alumni during the COVID pandemic have been exemplary; during the COVID crisis, U.S.-CAEF alumni organized large-scale charitable campaigns to aid vulnerable populations throughout Central Asia; helped hundreds of farmers in Tajikistan receive essential fertilizers to strengthen their crops; played a critical role in the production of face-shields that helped protect the lives of medical workers in Almaty; developed a COVID-tracking app in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and led one of the single largest laboratory providers of COVID tests in Kazakhstan. This combination of business skill, entrepreneurship, creativity, and commitment to helping those in need is perhaps the most distinguishing and important quality of U.S.-CAEF alumni.”

— **Dr. David P. Patton**
PRESIDENT & CEO, AMERICAN COUNCILS



ALUMNI AFFAIRS

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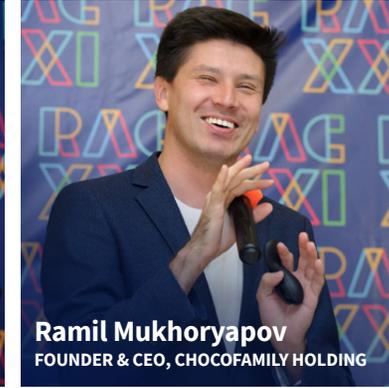
An inspiring group of keynote speakers offered their wisdom to the conference participants, making speeches and presentations on such crucial topics as ‘Sustainable Business and Investment Climate,’ ‘Automation and Technology in the Labor Force,’ ‘Global Competition in E-Commerce,’ ‘Combating Misinformation in the Central Asian Business Community,’ and many more. Their insights and guidance will undoubtedly assist in shaping the careers of the participants.



Sayasat Nurbek
FOUNDER & CEO, BTS EDUCATION



Daniar Amanaliev
CO-FOUNDER & CEO, OLOLO GROUP



Ramil Mukhoryapov
FOUNDER & CEO, CHOCOFAMILY HOLDING



Alyona Koshkina
PROGRAM MANAGER, MEDIANET
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM



Rada Islamova
FOUNDER & CEO
WONDER WOMEN COMMUNITY



Jamilya Imankulova
CO-FOUNDER
& CO-OWNER, ECOFARM



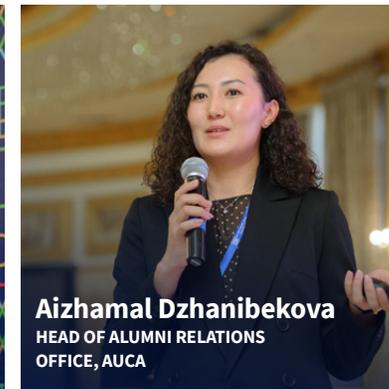
Timur Onzhanov
1ST DEPUTY CEO, BUSINESS CONNECT LTD.,
ASTANA INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE



Madina Abdibayeva
SR MANAGER, BUSINESS CONNECT LTD.,
ASTANA INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE



Abai Iliiazov
ALUMNI COORDINATOR
U.S. EMBASSY, KYRGYZ REPUBLIC



Aizhamal Dzhanibekova
HEAD OF ALUMNI RELATIONS
OFFICE, AUCA



ALUMNI AFFAIRS

CONTINUED

ALUMNI PANEL SESSIONS

Several of our very own U.S.-CAEF alumni offered their expertise by participating in 'Alumni Panel Sessions' on a variety of relevant topics. With four or more alumni panelists in each presentation, the sessions offered participants a critical opportunity to receive applicable advice from their peers related to the Central Asian and international business communities.

Alumni presentations were one of the major highlights of the conference not only for alumni and fellows, but for the guest speakers as well.

"The alumni are so amazing. It is a combination of motivation, ambition, talent, skill, and dedication to improving not only their country but also the region and the world. It is a great honor to participate in the first U.S.-CAEF Alumni Conference. The program itself and the Alumni Conference are the greatest proof that the return of our investments in human capital is the best capital you could ever get."

— **Sayasat Nurbek**
FOUNDER & CEO, BTS EDUCATION
KAZAKHSTAN (UGRAD ALUMNUS)



PRESENTATION TOPIC

PANELISTS

MODERATOR

Graduate School: What Program Makes Sense for You?

Tangulu Duishakhmatova
CHEVENING ALUMNA

Yelena Vorobey
ERASMUS ALUMNA

Ulukbek Abdubaliyev
ERASMUS ALUMNUS

Talgat Kadirov
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR

Zhamilia Klycheva
RESEARCH ASSISTANT & PHD
CANDIDATE, CLAREMONT
GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

Navigating the Entrepreneurial Journey

Irina Abasova
ENTREPRENEUR, SCI COMPANY

Yulia Grinina
FOUNDER & GENERAL DIRECTOR
GRINLAB LLC

Nargiza Zhakypova
CO-FOUNDER, IT-RUN &
AMERICAN-EUROPEAN SCHOOL

Kalys Zhumakadyr
HEAD OF BUSINESS
& AUTOMATION, TELE2

Shaislam Shabiev
ENTREPRENEUR

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Business Landscape

Nargiza Chaikozova
CO-FOUNDER, CHEKIROFF CONSULT
FINANCIAL MANAGER, FIT & GO

Alisher Mamunov
SOFTWARE ENGINEER
ITECHARTGROUP

Timur Azizov
E-COMMERCE
ENTREPRENEUR

Firuzha Khasanova
PROJECT MANAGER
MICROSOFT CORPORATION

Chyngyz Zhanybekov
COMMUNICATIONS EXPERT
UNFPA EECARO

Establishing Sustainability: The Future of the Alumni Association

Anisa Atalova
AUCA'16

Malika Pulotova
KIMEP'14

Arystan Moldabekov
KIMEP'11

Kalys Zhumakadyr
AUCA'14

Adel Sultanbekova
AUCA'16

Aidana Odeichuk
KIMEP'12



INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION OF FELLOW VOLUNTEERS



The success of the conference would not have been possible without current U.S.-CAEF fellows' involvement who volunteered their time and lent their diverse talents by acting as hosts of the event, engaging with the audience to keep the program exciting and flowing smoothly, helping maintain a healthy environment in accordance with the Covid-19 safety protocol, and assisting with other multiple logistical issues.

“Volunteers played a significant role in organizing RAC21. Their help with logistics and communication with participants was crucial. The RAC21 was successful because of their dedication and hard work,”

— **Sevara Tadzhibaeva**
REGIONAL ALUMNI
CONFERENCE COORDINATOR



On behalf of the organizers and participants of the conference, we would like to express our gratitude to all volunteers for their outstanding work and making the event a success. Their names are listed below:



Aigul Saparova
MASTER OF CEREMONY



Erbol Tiukebaev
MASTER OF CEREMONY

Bekjon Makhmudov

Alisina Rahmatullah

Zhasmin Shabieva

Baktygul Tazhamatova

Baktygul Kerimova

Aizana Arslanbekova

Begimai Azizbekova

Dzhamilia Lansarova

Lola Mardinaeva

Dinislam Almazbekov

Erbol Isaev

Nekruz Mirzoev

Farukh Farkhatov

Kanaiym Ishenbek

Bakhtovar Umarov

Samar Kanatov

Khusan Ravshanov

Matlubakhon Fozilova

Aiturgan Noiabidinova

Violetta Mazurina

Fotima Mirzoeva



CONFERENCE INSPIRED EVENTS

The extensive planning that went into the U.S.-CAEF Regional Alumni Conference ignited a wave of interest in creating smaller alumni events in the hope of building community and generating interest in the upcoming RAC21.

U.S.-CAEF alumni are remarkably creative, supportive, and innovative, and these events serve as prime examples of their unique skills and ideas. In the following passages we would like to highlight a few events inspired by the conference.

ALUMNI AFFAIRS

ESTABLISHING AN INDEPENDENT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The conference helped engage alumni and motivated them to establish the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association an independent organization. In October 2020, a group of active alumni created a strategic planning committee to develop an action plan to ensure the continuity of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association following the end of the initial program's funding in 2022. Since the committee's inception, its members have created a mission, vision, and transition plan that they presented at the alumni conference. **In November, shortly after the conference, Alumni were able to register the Association as an independent, non-profit organization in Bishkek. This is a major milestone for the program!**



CONTINUED

ALUMNI AFFAIRS

CONTINUED



A pilot project initiated and **sponsored by 10 U.S.-CAEF alumni** of earlier cohorts from AUCA and KIMEP, 'Idea Pitch' was designed to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit among current fellows and younger alumni.

The competition consisted of two rounds. During the first round, participants were asked to prepare short, three-minute video presentations that were eventually reviewed and evaluated by a panel of alumni investors in July 2021. The final round was held in person for Kyrgyz participants at AUCA, and participants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan joined the event via Zoom.

During this stage of the competition, participants made final, fine-tuned business pitches to the panel. Winners were announced during the conference on October 3.

We would like to extend a special congratulations to the winner of 'Idea Pitch,' AUCA senior **Kairat Tagaev**, co-founder of a textile company called

Ganador. Kairat is also planning to launch Ganador Warehouse, which he hopes will help other producers in Kyrgyzstan earn several times more than they do currently. As a result of winning the competition, Kairat won a monetary award of **\$5,000** for his efforts, which will contribute to the company's marketing and production costs.

KAIRAT AND HIS TEAM AT GANADOR WERE ABLE TO MANUFACTURE & SHIP OVER 10,000 PRODUCTS IN JUST ONE YEAR.

"I truly enjoyed networking with alumni and taking part in the process of preparing for the pitch. It helped me better understand the current market situation and my business. It is an amazing opportunity to be able to take your business to a new level and receive not only a monetary award, but advice from smart U.S.-CAEF alumni who have already gained significant experience in business. I would like to thank U.S.-CAEF for providing me this opportunity, and I hope that in two years I will be able to join the event as an alumni investor."



— **Kairat Tagaev**
WINNER OF THE COMPETITION

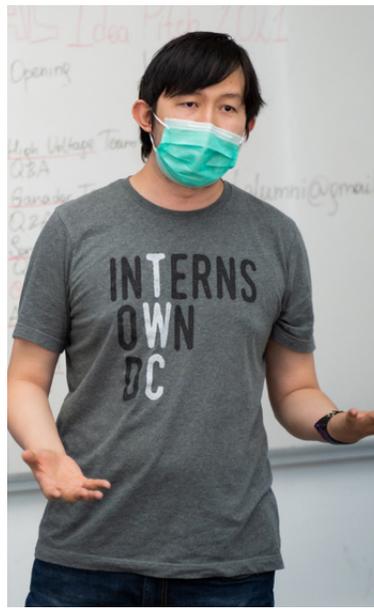
ALUMNI AFFAIRS

Team ‘Amigos,’ comprising U.S.-CAEF alumni ‘20 **Shaislam Shabiev** and **Atai Amanatov** and senior **Islambek Ashyraliev**, came in second for the launch of their e-commerce business. Due to the popularity of e-commerce platforms as a result of the pandemic, ‘Amigos’ was able to grow their business substantially in the last year, while supporting local suppliers in the process. The team looks forward to continuing their work in elevating local businesses in their community to become international brands. Team ‘Amigos’ was awarded a monetary award of **\$1,850** for their second-place win in the competition.

“Idea Pitch is a wonderful project full of positive energy and courage. The fact that U.S.-CAEF alumni are supporting each other in their endeavors makes me feel very proud to be a part of this lovely community. With the help of Idea Pitch, I had the chance to become part of a team with Atai and Shaislam, who share the same vision and values as me. It was so amazing to hear the ideas of other alumni and fellows as well. The common thread that seemed to connect all the ideas was that all the teams wanted to help their community through their business ideas. I hope Idea Pitch will continue in future years, and hopefully we will be able to continue investing in the wonderful ideas of our fellows and alumni,”



— **Islambek Ashyraliev**
MEMBER OF THE AMIGOS TEAM



ALUMNI INVESTORS

- Aigerim Almazova**
AUCA'16
- Karimkhon Bukhadurov**
KIMEP'17
- Aizharkyn Burkanova**
AUCA'14
- Nargiza Chaikozova**
AUCA'11
- Valentina Khomenko**
AUCA'15
- Maria Gudova**
AUCA'11
- Yelena Vorobey**
AUCA'14
- Ilhan Yollyyev**
KIMEP'16
- Nargiza Zhakypova**
AUCA'12
- Kalys Zhumakadyr**
AUCA'14

IdeaPitch was a great success, and inspired alumni and current fellows to work hard toward their career goals.

ALUMNI AFFAIRS

CONTINUED

ALUMNI MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

In March 2021, alumni launched a six-month mentorship program meant to offer networking, professional development, and career counseling opportunities for U.S.-CAEF alumni and fellows.

On October 23, participants of the program joined the online closing ceremony to reflect on their experiences. They expressed appreciation to the program for providing opportunities for their personal and professional growth and expanding their professional networks. Several participants reported that they were able to land jobs, improve their strategies for applying for scholarships, win business competitions, and expand their professional networks using different approaches as a direct result of the mentorship program. Others reported that the program helped them shape their goals, set priorities, and find balance in their lives.

“For the first time, our community had the opportunity to engage in a structured alumni mentorship program. It came with some extra efforts to organize ourselves and keep it going, but we had a professional trainer and a very supportive community from which to gain inspiration. In the last six months, I got the chance to support and guide a fantastic and inspiring young alumna in her career and education endeavors. It was a joint effort; through her questions, I also learned about myself, and we grew together. The closing ceremony was a great combination of reflection about the completed work and a way to connect and celebrate together in a virtual setting. Thank you for organizing, and I am looking forward to doing it again next year,”



— **Yelena Vorobey**
AUCA '14 | MENTOR



At the end of the event, participants were excited to learn about the last winners of the Mentor and Mentee of the Month competition:



MENTOR OF THE MONTH

Saodat Bazarova, an external mentor who currently works for Morgan Stanley and a UGRAD alumna, was awarded ‘Mentor of the Month’ for her exceptional contribution to the program. Her mentee, **Yuliya Lokkayeva** of Turkmenistan (KIMEP '16), wrote about how Saodat helped her secure employment:

“My aim was to grow further in finance. During the program, we focused on searching and applying for the job of my dreams - and it was successful! I have been dreaming of working for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and Saodat helped me to achieve this goal.”

In addition, Saodat shared her expertise and supported other mentees who reached out to her for advice.



MENTEE OF THE MONTH

Begimai Bolotbekova, Marketing Analyst, Coca-Cola Bishkek Bottlers, (AUCA '19) was awarded ‘Mentee of the Month’ for her active participation and dedication to the program. Throughout the program, Begimai was efficient, proactive, and expressed curiosity and willingness to learn from her mentee, **Sitora Shagambayeva**, Junior Brand Manager at Morgan-Williams International Inc., Canada, (KIMEP '17).

“Sitora became more than a mentor- she became a dear friend,” wrote Begimai, who is particularly grateful to Sitora and her spouse for helping her with an application for a graduate program.

More information about other conference-inspired events and on-demand conference materials are available at uscaef.org/rac21

ALUMNI CLOSE UP



GUFRONJON AYUBJONOV: PROMOTING WATER-SAVING TECHNOLOGIES IN TAJIKISTAN

Since 2019, U.S.-CAEF alumnus **Gufronjon Ayubjonov** (KIMEP, class of 2014) has been responsible for the Water Productivity Project at Sarob Cooperative, an organization that implements various agriculture and sustainability projects. Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the project serves 6 districts within the Sughd region of Tajikistan and promotes water-saving technologies to farmers, in the hope that they will receive a higher yield with a smaller amount of water.

Through their work, **Gufronjon and his team have helped over 3,000 farmers, 35% of whom are women. As a result of the project's impact, over 84% of farmers in the region are now using water-saving technologies, and produce a 20% greater yield than traditional farmers!** In addition to maximizing Tajikistan's fertile land, the project has also allowed farmers to work with international buyers and introduce their products to new markets.



CAPSTONE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The U.S.-CAEF Enterprise International Capstone Internship Program (Capstone) is administered by American Councils in partnership with The Washington Center, TWC (www.twc.edu). Conducted in Washington, D.C., the program is designed to help postgraduate fellows gain hands-on experience in their prospective professional fields while developing critical skills and expanding professional networks. In addition to their internships, fellows take part in career track meetings focusing on global and executive competencies and professional coaching sessions providing individualized guidance about their career paths. Despite the continued challenges created by the pandemic, the DC-based Capstone Internship program, resumed in the fall. **A total of 10 Capstone interns comprising two cohorts- 2020 and 2021- were excited to embark on their internship experiences in Washington DC.** According to the initial feedback the interns are gaining valuable professional knowledge and skills at their companies in the U.S.



Nurzada Abdivalieva feels that her background makes her a good fit for her internship role with the International Development Group LLC where she is involved in the project on strengthening debt management in the Kyrgyz Republic.

“Due to my nationality, knowledge of Russian and my economics major, I was assigned to this project. Our CEO David Snelbecker gave me a personal assignment to conduct research on technical assistance provided to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Finance. Moreover, the IDG

Internship Program requires all interns to produce a research project that would be useful for the IDG activities as well. I came up with the topic “Government Expenditure on Education in Kyrgyzstan.”

Bibigul Arzybaeva who interns as a data scientist with Lovelytics has earned two badges for successfully completing foundation and essential training on Apache Spark, an open-source unified analytics engine for large-scale data processing. As a result, Bibi has been assigned an important role in organizing and automating online courses for Columbia University.

“I was so excited to research and analyze data on the investment climate of the USA by working on tasks related to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) process. I am developing good understanding of Kazakhstan - U.S bilateral relationships and hope to continue improving my knowledge of international business further,”

wrote **Bayan Bekbas** who is a finance intern at the Embassy of the Kazakh Republic.

CAPSTONE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

CONTINUED

Olga Pykhova's internship at Potomac Riverkeeper Network allows her to combine her two passions in marketing and environmental protection:

“Right from the beginning, I became a member of the team and demonstrated proactive attitude. Almost every week, I participate in online or in-person company events that allow me to dive into the problem of water pollution. In addition, the team members support, provide guidelines, and treat me well.”

Sezim Zhenishbekova has been trusted with important projects at American Association of Exporters and Importers:

“As my supervisor has mentioned, my tasks have 20% of the weight into the company's success. I am participating in the administration and management of tasks ranging from data analysis and marketing to the development of operational procedures. Specific goals include the creation of a digital operations manual, marketing campaigns, and developing a design for an upcoming conference campaign by providing deliverables such as a website, and marketing emails for different demographics.



I have attended several committee meetings with Association members, where some are from Fortune 500 companies, to discuss upcoming policies. Currently, I am working on the creation and development of the AAEL's 101st Expo and Conference's website.”

Dilnaz Imeramzayeva, Ruslan Zhanaidar, Umar Nasriddinov and Dilrabo Saidalieva who intern as trade development associates with TradeBright, are excited to learn about technologies for managing projects and helping customers enter international markets and increase their sales.

“These skills may be useful in my future career, since many companies in Kazakhstan have great potential to enter the world market.”

— **Ruslan Zhanaidar**

Bekzat Sadyrbaev also feels that he is contributing to the success of the startup Buzz Voice Inc. where he is entrusted with conducting marketing research, developing new marketing strategies, managing social media platforms, and improving the quality and quantity of traffic to the company's website from search engines.

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