

U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation (U.S.-CAEF) Enterprise Student Fellowships is an undergraduate business education scholarship program for academically gifted students sponsored by the U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation (The Foundation) & 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 and other activities 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.

# NEWSLETTER



## CAPSTONE INTERNS SHARE THEIR U.S. EXPERIENCES

SAKINA YASAKIEVA, KHEDZHERA SULEEVA, MALIKA PULOTOVA & YELENA VOROBAY (ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: PAGE 8)

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## NEW SCHOOL YEAR WELCOME TO AUCA!

BY ALTYNAI MELISOVA, AUCA

Every U.S.-CAEF finalist has done a great job in order to achieve his/her goal to become an AUCA student and earn a scholarship. I am sure all applicants were shocked when they found out about the size of the application and all empty blank spaces that were supposed to be filled out. Each of us experienced some moments when we were ready to give up on our dream to study at AUCA but realized then that we must seize this great opportunity. Everyone remembers how nervous they were during the interviews or how they were analyzing all answers that they should have provided. Certainly, each of us remembers that nice summer day when we opened the mail box and discovered that we were finalists

of the U.S.-CAEF program! It was the moment full of pride and happiness. Someone was probably screaming with excitement, another one crying, I, personally, could not believe in what I was reading on the screen of my computer. And then we impatiently and eagerly waited for the beginning of our freshman year in AUCA. Moreover, we were curious to meet other lucky freshmen students.

Right now we are doing our best to study and try to be involved in many other activities. Our student life is full of sleepless nights because of doing multiple home assignments, perusing philosophical texts that can confuse your mind, solving matrices and

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ALTYNAI MELISOVA

*I was born on a rainy day on February 8, 1997 in Bishkek. I did not attend a kindergarten because I lived in a small village with my grandparents. At the age of six I went to a Russian elementary school without knowing*

cryptography, and learning about business ethics or the importance of four "P"-s in marketing.

However, our student life is not only about studying. As we learnt during the orientation week, it is important to use wonderful opportunities to establish and maintain connections with other students, alumni and staff.

Therefore, U.S.-CAEF fellows decided to be incredibly active. **Kanat Osmonov**, **Adylbek Dzhapashov**, **Azat Ismailov** became members of a debate club "Eloquent Crew"; **Azat Ismailov** joined the Enactus AUCA team, where he is involved in an ecological project; and **Zhibek Kamalbek kyzy** participates in Cultural Diplomacy Club. As for me, I became a member of all three clubs mentioned above. To build even wider social network, we try not to miss volunteering opportunities for different organizations and events. For example, it was an amazing experience to assist disabled people to complete "Bishkek Fun Run, 2014" marathon.

Here is what other freshmen shared about our freshmen year:

"Everyone is very unique in her/his way, especially the professors. You can always ask for help and be heard. I bet no other university offers their students a privilege of running with the university President on Saturday mornings! And we do have that!"

-Meryem Karakhasanova

"AUCA is a place where you can really become independent and make your own choice in life."

-Asel Amatova

We are so proud of being able to pass all tests, essays and interviews, receive U.S.-CAEF award letters and become part of AUCA. To conclude, I would like to say that being an AUCA student is amazing but being both AUCA and U.S.-CAEF student is even more amazing!!!

*a word of Russian. I have an incredible family: my parents and three younger brothers. During the 9th grade, I applied for the FLEX program, and failed, then I applied for the second time and passed! I spent an amazing year at North Star High School in Lincoln, Nebraska. Now I study business at AUCA, and I am proud to be a U.S.-CAEF finalist.*

## KIMEP FELLOWS WELCOME FRESHMEN

BY ILHAN YOLLYYEV, PRESIDENT OF U.S.-CAEF STUDENT ASSOCIATION, KIMEP UNIVERSITY

U.S.-CAEF Student Association came up with an idea to organize an event two weeks before the midterms at KIMEP that would help create a bond between current fellows and freshmen. The venue we chose for this event, NeCafe, is a popular place among young people with home like atmosphere where you can relax, play games, watch movies or chat with friends. It is the place where anyone can have a good time with friends. When we stepped into NeCafe, all fellows felt its warm and welcoming atmosphere. There was no need for ice-breakers. Each found an activity to participate in: students challenged themselves intellectually playing chess and other board games, enjoyed the fast-paced Uno spoon game, or just relaxed and chatted with each other. Freshmen had a chance to meet current fellows and make new friends. The quotes below reflect the exciting atmosphere of the event:



"I really liked it as we gathered together in an informal atmosphere and got to know each other better through various activities!"

Jahongir Rahimov  
TAJIKISTAN 2014



"I loved that all of us could gather in a very informal place. Really looking forward to similar team building events!"

Elvira Chuibekova  
KAZAKHSTAN 2014



"Teambuilding was so much fun! I met other fellows and it turned out that with some of them I have the same classes! It was good to know!"

Kamila Bekbaganbetova  
KAZAKHSTAN 2014





“Thank you all for organizing this teambuilding. It was very much needed in the midst of midterms, as we all needed to de-stress a little bit. In my opinion, this teambuilding was a very unique one. Every minute was entirely our own and it was only up to us whether or not to make it enjoyable. I, personally, was able to catch up with some of the fellows with whom I haven't spoken for past 8 months.”

-Chynara Erkulova  
KYRGYZSTAN 2012

## LEARNING BEYOND CAMPUS WONDERLAND CALLED NORWAY

BY ADEL SULTANBEKOVA, AUCA

I was truly blessed to spend my spring semester 2014 at Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), Ås, Norway. Those five months were the busiest months in my life. In addition to the challenging academic program, I participated in two international conferences outside of Norway, and organized various events at the university.

Almost every university in Norway has International Student Union (ISU) funded by the Norwegian government which is a student organization in charge of international students'affairs. I also joined the ISU board as an elected treasurer. Besides maintaining financial records, doing budget reports and controlling overall financial performance of the club, I was involved in the organization of events for international students at NMBU. One of the biggest events was the international food festival. Participants from 23 countries took part in this event preparing food and presenting their cultures to the Ås community. This was also a great opportunity for us, Kyrgyz students, to present our country in front of about 600 attendees, meet people from all over the world and learn about their unique cultures.

Norway is a fascinating country that has lots of breathtaking places, one of the most interesting cultures and people. Its extraordinary nature is what I felt in love with from the first sight--there are no words to describe this. Fjords, nothern lights, beautiful winter landscapes, clean environment, developed transportation system, technological innovations, different outdoor activities, trolls and vikings - those are just a few words that pop up when I think about this environmentally friendly, one of the most developed and “cozy” countries.

I would like to thank AUCA and U.S.-CAEF for a life changing experience that let me “plunge” into the wonderland called Norway.



ADEL SULTANBEKOVA (LEFT)

## KYRGYZ & JAPANESE STUDENTS WORK TOGETHER ON A TOURISM PROJECT

BY ULUKBEK ABDUBALIEV, AUCA

On July 30-August 8, I participated in a research project on improvement of tourism industry with Japanese students. The project was created by Nagoya University, Japan to help countries like Kyrgyzstan promote economic development.

Ten students from Nagoya and six from Bishkek were selected to participate in the research. First three days we took part in training sessions on how to write a business plan, and the other two days we spent in Cholpon-Ata, Issyk-Kul oblast to conduct our on-site research. After returning to Bishkek, we presented a

business plan on improving the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan, specifically we created a plan for launching a recreation center in the Issyk-Kul region. His Excellency Mr. Takayuki Koike, Ambassador of Japan to the Kyrgyz Republic, and other members of the Japanese Embassy attended the presentation.

I really enjoyed this experience, because I had a chance to meet and work together with Japanese students, and use my knowledge in marketing and management, and simply be part of this great and useful project.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ULUKBEK ABDUBALIEV

*I am a senior student of AUCA's Business Administration department. I served as Vice President of AIESEC, an international student organization and was in charge of outbound exchange programs. I am also a Global UGRAD alumnus 2013-2014. Besides my studies and university activities, I like to play soccer, chess and solve the Rubik's Cube. Currently, I work at Avisa web-development company as a marketing specialist.*



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH MAKE AN ORPHAN SMILE

BY ZARRINA MULLOBOEVA, KIMEP UNIVERSITY

U.S.-CAEF fellows together with other KIMEP students from different countries organized a charity project "Make an Orphan Smile". The idea of the project was to donate clothes, books and toys to orphans and spend a fun day with them.

First we tried to attract more volunteers and with their help we collected donations from KIMEP students. As a result, we managed to gather more than 30 items of clothing, 15 books, some toys and about 22,000 tenge. We spend the money on sweets and other fun things.

Then all fifteen of us visited orphanage # 1 on Saturday, October 18th. Students were enthusiastic to get to know children, tell them about their countries and university life. We organized outdoor games, and dance classes for over fifty children of different ages. Afterwards, we had a tea party for all. Every child was very friendly and open. They told us about their lives there, achievements at



school and different competitions and about the people who visit them.

“I was so blessed when I got to know all those kids - each of them was so unique, so awesome. We were hanging out with kids only for one day, hopefully, they realized that there are some people who care about them”, one of the volunteers, Irina Kulikova, said after the event.

“Today I realized that there is no such thing as a stranger when it comes to a child”, a freshman student, **Galiya Kemelbayeva**, shared.



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### CAPSTONE INTERNS SHARE THEIR U.S. EXPERIENCES

The U.S. International Capstone Internship program is an opportunity for recent U.S.-CAEF graduates to immerse themselves in the global business network. The program is specifically designed to help these individuals explore career options, gain valuable skills and make professional contacts. Four select interns, **Yelena Vorobey** of AUCA, **Malika Pulotova**, **Sakina Yasakieva** and **Khedzhera Suleeva** of KIMEP University, are currently participating in The Washington Center’s postgraduate professional development program in Washington, D.C. The interns report that through this experiential learning program they are acquiring critical skills that will help them succeed in the dynamic and changing global business environment, experiencing a new culture, establishing new relationships, and enjoying new life challenges. The quotes below reflect the interns’ first impressions and thoughts about their Capstone experience.

#### **Yelena Vorobey, AUCA alumna**

My internship as a business research analyst at the United Planning Organization CDC is directly related to my academic background at AUCA. I work on the development of project proposals for microloans that involves development of project goals, activities, desired outcomes and budgets. My responsibilities also include assessment of credit risks and development of credit proposals. The work environment is great--my coworkers treat me as a professional and trust me with important and challenging tasks. I am also glad that my academic course on nonprofit management that I take at The Washington Center perfectly supplements my internship and helps me synthesize new ideas.

Besides, life in DC provides a variety of professional development opportunities. Especially, I was excited to participate in an IMF/World Bank annual conference on October 6-11, where I had a chance to represent Central Asia and expand my professional network and meet famous academics, Nobel laureates, politicians and successful businessmen. I had a chance to attend a private reception hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce and talk to representatives of IMF, World Bank, Kazakh National Bank and the American Post. In addition, volunteering with the American Councils, animal adoption fairs and the Red Cross keep me very busy. I enjoy my Capstone experience to the fullest, and I am eager to spend two more months in Washington, DC.





MALIKA PULOTOVA AT VOICE OF AMERICA

### Malika Pulotova, KIMEP University alumna

I am interning at Voice of America, the largest US international broadcaster. VOA broadcasts in 45 languages, and I am happy to be part of this internationally recognized and diverse organization. I am a digital marketing intern at the Horn of Africa service that mainly broadcasts to Ethiopia and Eritrea in three languages: Amharic, Tigrigna and Afaan Oromoo. My position entails working on the service's digital product, improving brand recognition and audience building among young people. My responsibilities include preparation of the relevant content for digital media platforms and websites, analyzing web traffic and social media performance. Through this internship I am learning so much about digital marketing, media, radio, journalism and communications. In addition, I try to take advantage of training opportunities at my workplace, and networking and cultural events, and other activities that are available in Washington, DC. I would like to wish every U.S. -CAEF Fellow to strive for best and experience the same transformational experience that definitely changes lives! International Capstone program is truly a unique opportunity for a young professional to decide on the area of professional interest, develop new professional skills, and experience professional environment.

### Khedzhera Suleeva, KIMEP University alumna

The Washington Center provides a myriad of opportunities for professional and personal development starting from mock up interviews, brushing up on your public speaking skills to networking opportunities and even cultural activities such as salsa classes. The program is unique because it combines various components that help you grow. Through my internship experience in the finance department of World Learning where. I am responsible for divisional accounting functions I am building important auditing skills and learning to use new accounting software systems. I like the work environment at World Learning--the staff is really friendly and ready to help me any time.

In addition to my internship, I am taking an entrepreneurship course. The class is interactive and practical where we learn to promote business ideas. Currently, we are preparing for a pitch contest where participants will be presenting their business projects. Living in a different environment is truly enriching. I feel being immersed in a diverse community of TWC. My U.S.-CAEF fellows and I are very excited about the upcoming Global Citizenship Day, an international festival that celebrates cultural diversity, where we will be representing Central Asia.



KHEDZHERA SULEEVA



SAKINA YASAKIEVA

### Sakina Yasakieva, KIMEP University alumna

I am interning in Thoron Capital, a leading real estate developer and manager of real estate investments that is actively involved in mitigating risks and generating superior risk-adjusted returns for its investors. I am interning as a Junior Investment Analyst--sounds really responsible and a little bit scary. I did not even know what kind of a job this was. However, after getting involved in the company projects, I found out that it is interesting and challenging. This internship is different from my other experiences-- I don't just sit in the office in front of my computer; I am always in motion. At the moment, I can say that I love real estate, it is really interesting. I was already introduced to four investors, who are going to sponsor our projects and meet different architects. I am involved in planning of all properties and was able to see some properties we are building. Thoron Capital has a very friendly work environment. It is a workplace where I can grow not only professionally but intellectually, where my knowledge and work are appreciated. Being part of this internship site makes me feel that I am in the right place and going in the right direction.

In addition, I am involved in different projects of The Washington Center (TWC) which makes me feel so proud and useful. I did not even notice how two months have passed by, because I am busy all the time, and I like it. Despite the fact that most of my time is spent at my internship site, I have to study and do well in my academic course, and do my volunteer hours through my civic engagement program. The program helped me improve my time management skills. Actually, I used to have a lot of problems getting everything done. Now I am becoming a professional in time management and punctuality.

## AMBASSADORS OF CENTRAL ASIA IN THE U.S.

BY MALIKA PULOTOVA & YELENA VOROBAY, CAPSTONE INTERNS



On November 7, 2014 The Washington Center's interns hosted an international festival for all students. The evening included a talent show featuring live music and dance performances, country information tables, a national costume fashion show and traditional meals. Seventeen international student groups were proud to present their countries at the event. Our team from Central Asia represented Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and surely it was one of the brightest groups. A beautiful medley of indigenous dances showed the passion and grace of the region featuring the immense Kazakh steppes, magnificent Pamir Mountains and thrilling Dungan lifestyle. The information booth introduced guests to Central Asian history, crafts and food which added to the taste of the experience.

The Embassy of Kazakhstan had a special role in this event—they provided brochures and books about

Kazakhstan, traditional souvenirs and gifts for visitors, beautiful national costumes and interesting video materials. Especially, we would like to thank Mr. Askhat Ablaissov, Consul of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the U.S., who provided a tremendous support during the preparation for the event and encouraged us by his presence at the festival. "It's a great pleasure for the Kazakh Embassy and for me personally to support such talented and motivated citizens who represent their homeland in the international arena with such dignity and grace.... Most importantly, hundreds of people today learned about Kazakhstan thanks to you", Mr. Ablaissov told us after the event.

Many interns and guests praised us for our presentations and wanted to take pictures with us which made us so happy and proud. Indeed, we felt like true ambassadors of Central Asia in the United States.

## SADDAM'S ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

### INTERVIEW WITH SADDAM BAYALIEV

BY TANGULU DIUSHAKHMATOVA, PRESIDENT OF U.S.-CAEF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Saddam is a U.S.-CAEF alumnus, AUCA 2007. Currently, he is a successful businessman and CEO of three companies--BM Technologies, UMAI Payment Systems & LLC Zamat Cargo

**Tangulu:** Saddam, thank you for your time and sharing your business experience with us.

**Saddam:** It is my pleasure to spend my time meeting with old friends and sharing knowledge and experience with each other. I think every nice chat has a good value for our professional or personal development.

**Tangulu:** Yes, indeed. Saddam, can you tell us how your entrepreneurship life started? What guided your decision of pursuing an adventurous road of an entrepreneur rather than of an office employee?

**Saddam:** Soon after our graduation from AUCA, my elder brother and his partner invited me to their new business venture that turned out to be of quite good success. The business is related to logistics of textile cargo from Kyrgyzstan to Russia; the company mainly deals with customs duties and requirements. The success of the company was due



## WHAT IS KAIZEN?

Kaizen is the practice of continuous improvement. Kaizen was originally introduced to the West by Masaaki Imai in his book *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success* in 1986. Today kaizen is recognized worldwide as an important pillar of an organization's long-term competitive strategy. Kaizen is continuous improvement that is based on certain guiding principles. One of the most notable features of kaizen is that big results come from many small changes accumulated over time. While the majority of changes may be small, the greatest impact may be kaizens that are led by senior management as transformational projects, or by cross-functional teams as kaizen events.

## SOURCE:

[www.kaizen.com/about-us/definitionof-kaizen.html](http://www.kaizen.com/about-us/definitionof-kaizen.html)

to thorough study of the best business practices in the field and identifying and applying better solutions that led to a substantial decrease of the cargo delivery time, which is one of the key desires of our clients. As a result of our joint efforts, the company made about 2 million USD in its first financial year which is not bad for the Kyrgyz market. Currently, I am not much involved in this business because many business processes have been well established and run smoothly.

**Tangulu:** That sounds impressive. So where has the entrepreneurship spirit led you after the first successful business venture?

**Saddam:** Well, we live in a very dynamic technological era; thus, I decided to be part of this growth and entered the market of social media by creating such a product as Class.kg. The idea is to make a platform for schoolchildren, their parents and teachers that is an effective and user friendly tool in study processes-- children and teachers can easily collaborate with each other, while parents can monitor kids' progress. We have already introduced the platform in several schools. In addition to this project, my team is working on another project that is related to mobile payments; just imagine that soon you will be able to pay your restaurant bills with the help of your mobile phone. Yes, the one you are holding right now.

**Tangulu:** I can feel that you are so much into your new start-ups and you are actually enjoying every day spent working on your projects but I guess there are times when things do not go the way you want. What are the challenges that you and your team usually face?

**Saddam:** People say that partially because of my young age I want things to be done very quickly and in the best way possible. We make plans and it seems that we have covered all the possible outcomes and processes but then in reality it turns out there are so many small details, which lead to some delays and consequently to changes in our initial plans and timelines. Therefore, I sometimes push hard my team and myself. Moreover, running a business is not just about having specific duties to perform-- it is about doing everything, literally everything you can imagine, starting from HR, accounting, financial and strategic planning to answering phone calls and dealing with client complaints etc. Therefore, the main challenge is to keep learning every day - talking to experts and consultants, reading about business processes and keeping an eye on market trends and learning how to better manage and lead my team. In terms of business management, I found Kaizen business philosophy to be close to me. I think that continuous improvement is the key factor for every business successful development.

**Tangulu:** Once again, we learn that owning a business means non-stop hard work in contrast of our perception of working any time one wants. I am sure you will overcome all the challenges. What about the big vision? What projects you and your team are currently working on?

**Saddam:** Our big vision is that one day there will be a technological product created in Kyrgyzstan and used worldwide. Imagine children using Class.kg in Dubai or Australia. So, we dream big.

**Tangulu:** On this positive note I would like to thank you once again and wish you the best of luck and huge success in all your upcoming projects.

**"... THE MAIN CHALLENGE IS TO KEEP LEARNING EVERY DAY - TALKING TO EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS, READING ABOUT BUSINESS PROCESSES AND KEEPING AN EYE ON MARKET TRENDS & LEARNING HOW TO BETTER MANAGE & LEAD MY TEAM. ...RUNNING A BUSINESS IS NOT JUST ABOUT HAVING SPECIFIC DUTIES TO PERFORM- IT IS ABOUT DOING EVERYTHING, LITERALLY EVERYTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE.."**



## LIFE AFTER UNIVERSITY

BY NASIBA NURMATOVA, AUCA



KALYS ZHUMAKADYR UULU IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

I am a senior, and soon I will be graduating from AUCA. This makes me think more and more about the time after graduation and how to prepare myself for future. Talking to U.S.-CAEF alumni is really helpful and encouraging, and I am sure other fellows will agree with me. So I came up with an idea to include updates from our alumni in our newsletters. I think that these short stories will show our current fellows how many interesting adventures are waiting for them after graduation, and how they can apply the valuable knowledge and skills they have acquired during their student years. Below are some short alumni stories:

**Aizharkyn Burkanova** (Class 2014) is running a coffee shop at AUCA and even Mr. Andrew Wachtel, President of the university, helped Aizharkyn serve customers several times. Aizharkyn's full story about her business will be included in the next issue. If you would like to learn about Zebra Coffee now, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/zebracoffeeekg>. Come to Zebra Coffee and taste the delicious coffee, tea, pastries and sandwiches and support our fellow's startup!

**Kalys Zhumakadyr uulu's** (Class 2014) thesis, "Context Effect on Financial Product Choice," was approved by the editorial board members of the Central Asia Business Journal and included in its Vol. 6, No. 1 Fall 2014 issue. The journal presents research on key business and economic issues of the region. Appearing each spring and fall, CABJ is published by the Bang College of Business in KIMEP University. Currently, Kalys is attending Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA as an International John M. Gunn Scholar.

**Andrey Leskin** (Class of 2012) was hired by an American company, FMN Logistics ([www.fmnlogistics.com](http://www.fmnlogistics.com)), as a business development associate. The company provides consulting services and logistical support to its clients. Andrey is responsible for

finding new business opportunities and customers for the company. In addition, Andrey became a father in the summer, and is very excited to find himself in this new role.

**Yelena Vorobey's** (Class of 2014) thesis "Impact of Intellectual Property Rights on Inflows of Direct Foreign Investments" was published in the 2014 2nd edition of "Vestnik", an academic journal of the Kyrgyz Economic University.

**Rustam Bakibayev** (Class of 2014) received a full scholarship for a three year graduate degree program in International Economics at Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey. During his first year, Rustam is required to study intensive Turkish language classes before taking major courses toward his master's degree.

**Chyngyz Zhanybekov** (Class of 2014) became a project manager at the International Business Council (IBC). IBC unites a wide range of local and international businesses. Its activities are aimed at creating an attractive investment climate in Kyrgyzstan by improving legislation on entrepreneurship, and promoting efficient business practices. IBC actively supports economic reforms and ensures that private sector interests are represented in the government decision-making process.

**Aliya Sultanova** (Class of 2014): "At the university, I had a certain circle of friends and classmates. Now I spend 5 days a week in the office [Judo Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic] with completely new people of different ages and backgrounds. However, soon I realized that these new people could still be awesome. Being an open-minded person, I was surprised at how easy relationships at work can be built."

Many more stories to come in the next issues!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



NASIBA  
NURMATOVA

*I am from Osh. My passion for newsletters goes back to high school when I ran the school newspaper "AKS press," which I founded.*

*Now I am a senior in the Business Administration department. In my opinion, it is important to combine hard work with fun work. My hobby is still writing newspaper articles.*



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