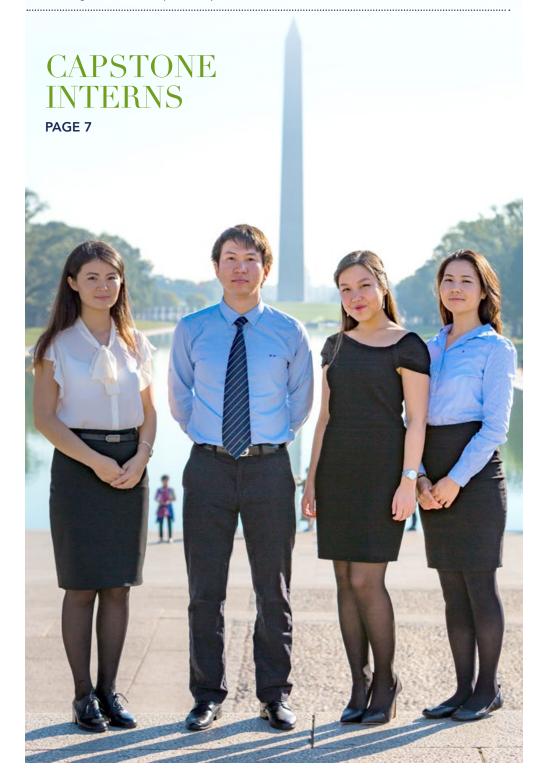


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NEWSLETTER

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.



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ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

FIRST STEPS IN BUSINESS CONSULTING

BY KUTTUBEK RAKHMANBERDIEV | KYRGYZSTAN 2013

When I was organizing an educational camp for Kyrgyz youth in Talas in the summer, I met several young entrepreneurs. One of them, Melis Abdyrashitov, owner of a small local newspaper, was experiencing many problems with his business. One of them was the company's outdated and barely functioning equipment.

After analyzing the problems and doing some research, I recommended he apply for an international grant program that supports media companies featuring the daily life of village women. Melis followed my advice, and together we filled out a long application. Shortly after the submission of the documents, we were happy to find out that his application was approved, and he received funding, which allowed him to update his equipment. Encouraged by this success, I helped Melis develop his marketing and sales strategy. In addition, I taught him to use social networks for advertisement and helped him create a website (www.tj.kg).

Currently, Mr. Abdyrashitov is successfully running his business. By using the social media tools that we developed together, he was able to expand his business to the entire Talas region. In the past three months, his sales increased by 15-20%. In addition, his website became a great platform for local businesses for advertisement and attraction of customers.

Currently, I am interning at Promotank, a well-known consulting company. I have been involved in a very interesting project called Public Private Partnership (PPP. This concept is new not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in all CIS countries.



Partnerships between government and private companies can be used to build, finance and operate projects, such as hospitals, public transportation networks, schools, etc. Financing a project through a PPP can help improve quality and expedite completion of such projects.

In my opinion, PPP has a great potential in our country. If the Kyrgyz government and businesses learn to cooperate, I am sure that our country's economic growth will accelerate. Nowadays, most of developed countries such as USA, England and Germany are successfully using this type of partnership in order to solve very important problems of the community. I am really proud to be part of this beginning...

WHERE BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY MEET

BY DANIIAR ABDIEV | KYRGYZSTAN 2015



When I learned about a summer internship opportunity in the IT department of the US Embassy in Bishkek, I decided to give it a shot, although it is not directly related to my major, Business Administration.

My first week proved to be a little bit challenging in terms of work hours – after working all day long I did not want to even watch my favorite cartoons. However, soon I became completely used to my new schedule and got into the stream of professional work. During my internship I learned a lot about corporate culture and management of informational systems. I have also learned a lot about management through observing my supervisor, who used different managerial methods and became my mentor.

At the end of the internship I was offered a part-time job. Now I work in the IT department of the US Embassy twice a week, on Thursday and Friday. This experience helped me realize how IT is important for my future career in business and it influenced my decision to take classes related to computer science in the fall semester--Discrete Mathematics & Mathematical Logic and 3D Animation and Design. I enjoy the combination of my Business major with IT; thus, I believe, I am going to continue pursuing this career path. I believe in the modern world it is crucial for a business manager to be able to integrate computer technologies with his or her company's workflow. It does not matter whether you are a manager of an IT company or a bakery: understanding IT technologies can be not only the matter of competitive advantage, but perhaps, even the matter of your business' survival.

INTERNSHIP AT ASTANA MOTORS: DISCOVERING ADVANCED FINANCE TOOLS

BY JAMSHED UMARZODA | TAJIKISTAN 2013



Astana Motors was established in 1992. The company represents famous car brands such as BMW, Toyota, Subaru, Hyundai, Nissan, MINI, Lexus and Rolls-Royce. Astana Motors has been consistently rated as best auto dealer by the Consumers League of Kazakhstan and won numerous awards at domestic and international exhibitions and contests.

Working in the Finance Department of Astana Motors allowed me to learn from professionals who have managed the organization strategically and efficiently, maintained stable growth for more than twenty years, and led the company to share more than 20% of the car sales of Kazakhstan's market. I was highly motivated and interested in the operations of Astana Motors.

During my internship, I was working on very different aspects of finance, which included working with advanced program applications for business management and forecasting future performances, financial consolidation of 23 separate fragments through financial models of Astana Motors, error identification, and enhancement of the quality of information and so on.

I was very passionate about the sophisticated program applications used by Astana Motors. The company is moving towards a new system/platform to manage its business and I am proud that I was one of the few to be able to learn the new skills quickly. By sharing my newly acquired knowledge with colleagues I was able to develop good relations within my department. I am sure that this experience combined with the exceptional knowledge from KIMEP will help me achieve all my career goals in the future.

START-UP BRINGS SERVICES TO YOUR DOORS

BY NIGORA BURKHONOVA | TAJIKISTAN 2015



During the summer semester, I was offered the chance to work on a start-up project - 103apteka at Association of Kazakhstani Internet Business and Mobile Commerce (AKIB). 103apteka is a convenient website and mobile application, which allows people to choose and order various types of high quality medications that are legal in Kazakhstan and can be delivered to home addresses. I worked as a content manager during the internship and really enjoyed it. My responsibilities included maintaining the database of medications and performing inventory counts at the end of each day.

In addition, I had the chance to attend the company's weekly meetings, where I learned how the company works. Also, we attended several presentations on different start-up projects and had a chance to meet and talk with different representatives of AKIB members, such as ChocoFamily, ChocoTravel, Lamoda, Foodpanda and so on.

The most challenging part of my internship was balancing it with my studies. However, I managed to complete both successfully. I learned a lot during this internship, most importantly how to be an effective team member. I hope that this first work experience will become the basis and the beginning of my further accomplishments for the following years of study at KIMEP.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

INCREASING FINANCIAL LITERACY IN KYRGYZSTAN

BY ALTYNAI MELISOVA | KYRGYZSTAN 2014

On July 25- August 25, forty AUCA students and alumni were involved in a survey organized by International Financial Corporation (IFC) in partnership with the World Bank and National Bank of Kyrgyz Republic. The goal of the campaign was to conduct in-depth interviews with individual microcredit users with the purpose of collecting data that would help analyze the behavior of borrowers and measure the impact of the loans on living standards.

Interviewers were divided into three groups. The first two conducted interviews in the north of Kyrgyzstan while the third group was sent to the south of the country. Seven U.S.-CAEF fellows and alumni took part in the project-- Altynai Melisova, Gulnaza Khalmanbetova, Makhabat Tashbaltaeva, Medina Abylkasymova, Sagynai Koichueva, Asel Kaldybaeva, and Aiperi Sharipova. Each conducted about 10-12 interviews a day.

After collecting the information (over 4,000 questionnaires), fellows were engaged in data analysis and preparation of the report based on the findings.

"I was chosen as a coordinator of the third group in Osh. My duties included holding briefings with the group to discuss progress and challenges, managing logistics, maintaining regular communication, and reporting to IFC every 3-4 days. It was a huge responsibility because the results of the interview campaign will be used by financial institutions in their recommendations for the future economic development of Kyrgyzstan. Involvement in this project boosted my leadership and communication skills, and most importantly, helped me develop important analytical skills," wrote Gulnaza Khalmanbetova.

"The goal of the project is to increase financial literacy in rural communities. The inefficient use of loans by the rural population of



Kyrgyzstan is becoming an economic burden. I hope this project will help reduce inefficient use of loans in Kyrgyzstan," commented Asel Kaldybaeva, who worked with the northern region.

All fellows noted that the project was a very productive experience that helped them learn more about Kyrgyzstan's credit system and identify significant issues related to loans.

Next summer a similar project will be held once again. I would like to encourage our fellows and alumni to take part in the project and gain valuable experience and contribute to the development of financial literacy in rural communities.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN TAJIKISTAN

BY ZARRINAKHON MULLOBOEVA | TAJIKISTAN 2013



Women in Tajikistan face major inequality issues. They have fewer opportunities for education and employment compared to other places. As I was first chosen to become a FLEX finalist and then a U.S.-CAEF fellow, I wanted to give back to my community by empowering women like me to pursue their dreams and not be afraid to speak up.

I won a FLEX Alumni grant to conduct a 3 Day Training, "Girls for Girls", in my hometown – Khujand. The event gathered twenty 15-17 year-old girls from different backgrounds who had an opportunity to learn about the success stories of women leaders, take part in open discussions, and engage in games and other activities. The entire training was conducted in English and included such important topics as project management, healthy lifestyle, personal finance, public speaking, and educational and volunteering opportunities. The workshop created a platform that connected girls with their peers and brought them together to talk about the change that they can make in their communities. Currently, they are actively participating in workshops on leadership, the role of women in society, and financial planning sponsored by Imon International, a microfinance institution in Tajikistan.

The project fosters equal opportunities for both genders. As a result of the project, the participants developed a better understanding of their rights and opportunities and became inspired by female community leaders to implement their own projects. I hope the workshop will help them to become successful in the workplace and become active members of the community, bringing about positive changes.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

EXCHANGE STUDIO: BECOME BETTER VERSION OF YOURSELF

BY ANISA ATALOVA | AUCA CLASS OF 2016



Ignat Kim (Class of 2014), together with **Valentina Khomenko** (Class of 2015) and Nadezhda Pak, a FLEX alumna, have founded a language center, Exchange Studio, in Bishkek. Exchange Studio currently provides the following educational programs: Intensive English classes; English for Kids; Admissions English – preparation for admissions to universities which includes Business Studies, Economics, Math, English for Academic Purposes, TOEFL and IELTS preparation; and preparation for the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX). Moreover, the center offers other languages such as German and Chinese. Currently, they have three full-time and three part-time employees, and about 40 students.

"The idea of the studio reflects my social position. I have always been dreaming about helping youth develop their potential. Therefore, the mission of Exchange Studio is not only to educate, but also give an opportunity to students to develop important qualities that will help them face life's challenges and achieve success," explained Ignat, who left his successful career at Manas International Airport to pursue his entrepreneurial dreams. Valentina, who is currently in a master's program in Strategic Entrepreneurship at Jönköping International Business School, Sweden, also shares Ignat's social position: "For me it was more about what we are good at, what our society needs and how we can combine our skills and passion. As FLEX and U.S-CAEF alumni, we understand benefits of educational programs; therefore, we want to help youth apply for such programs and motivate them to study."

Ignat and Valentina believe that Exchange Studio is for young people who aspire to become better versions of themselves. They see a huge potential in their venture because Exchange Studio strives to meet social needs of youth and stimulates positive changes in the local community.

HELPING KYRGYZSTAN INTEGRATE INTO GLOBAL MARKET

BY YELENA VOROBEY



Little by little, Kyrgyzstan places itself on the global market and makes steps towards cooperating with companies internationally, and our U.S.-CAEF alumni have a part to play in this process. We have received an interesting story from Abduvali Umarov, KIMEP Class of 2011. Abduvali informed us that the company he works for, rustel.kg, has established a subsidiary for the purpose of opening the first KFC fast-food chain in Kyrgyzstan. After some extensive negotiations involving representatives from Kyrgyzstan, Russia and the United States, the consensus was achieved to open the chain in February 2017. Abduvali played a major role in the success of this project; his English language and communication skills became handy during the negotiations. The new company has already successfully passed its first audit of the warehouses, facilities and equipment. A year earlier, Abduvali reached an agreement for supply of Halal chicken with Petelino Trading House, and in 2014, he signed an agreement with Aviko Foodservice, the largest French fries supplier in Europe.

MY EXPERIENCE AT COCA-COLA BOTTLERS UZBEKISTAN LTD

BY AZIZ YULDASHEV | KIMEP CLASS OF 2011



I joined the Coca-Cola Bottlers Uzbekistan Ltd Company in November 2013 as an import contracts administrator in the Procurement and Logistics Department. In 2014, I was promoted to Executive Assistant to the General Director of the company. During this time, I had the opportunity to visit Coca-Cola in Kazakhstan and the regional headquarters of the company in Istanbul, Turkey; I also took part in the Coca-Cola Global Summit in Atlanta, USA, which helped me enrich my professional experience and allowed me to understand better how important strategic decisions of the company are made.

In 2016, I became Public Affairs Coordinator. In this role I am actively engaged in the joint Coca-Cola and UNDP water project in Uzbekistan.

INNOVATE FOR CHANGE 2016 IN DUSHANBE

BY AMINA IQBOLZODA | KIMEP CLASS OF 2015



Encouraged by the success of Innovate for Change, a two-week professional development project held in Tajikistan in 2015, I decided to continue the tradition and take a lead on this project this year. With the support of Tcell, a telecommunication company, and Sheraton Hotel, Dushanbe, I organized a social entrepreneurship workshop on August 1-12 in Dushanbe.

The workshop was divided into two parts. During the first half, participants learned about different aspects of entrepreneurship and social change from the CEOs of local companies, social entrepreneurs and community leaders. The second portion of the conference was practical: participants were divided into two groups and engaged in real projects offered by Sheraton and Tcell. At the end of the workshop, both teams presented their projects and received funding for the realization of their ideas.

Several U.S.-CAEF fellows participated in the event, including **Firuza Hasanova**, a recent KIMEP graduate, who received a job offer from Sheraton Hotel, where she currently works as a food-and-beverage assistant. The comments of two U.S.-CAEF fellows describe how the workshop changed their views about the job market and business environment in Tajikistan:

Nigora Burhanova, cohort 2015: "Taking part in this program was a great opportunity for me to learn a lot about business opportunities in Tajikistan. The first six days of training were quite challenging for me. However, they helped create a good foundation for the second part of the workshop, which turned out to be very interesting and useful. Our team of eight people worked with Tcell Company and we came up with a very interesting business idea of creating an agency that will deal with organizing various events; we called it "Event Go." We did a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of our project, identified challenges and calculated the budget and profits. After the presentation, we found our first investor and received cash right away for organizing our first event, PechaKucha (a fast paced slide presentation), in September."

Zarrina Mullobaeva, cohort 2013: "We all want to see our country become a better place by strengthening education, improving infrastructure, and investing in people, but not all of us know how. During a 12-day program, "Innovate for Change", participants got a bit closer to the answer. We learned about social entrepreneurship and its power to bring positive changes to communities, and we met inspirational people who are in the forefront of the development efforts in Tajikistan. I personally saw opportunities for my career and future projects I couldn't imagine existed at home. The knowledge I acquired during this week was a great addition to what I've learned so far. I'd like to thank the organizers and participants for strengthening my belief in the Tajik people and the future of my home country."



IMPROVING TOURISM IN KYRGYZSTAN

BY NASIBA NURMATOVA | AUCA CLASS OF 2015



On September 3 - 8, the second World Nomad Games took place in Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan. The World Nomad Games are an international sport competition dedicated to ethnic sports. The event was widely broadcast and attracted the attention of millions, especially tourists. The World Nomad Games have become a great opportunity to evaluate tourism in Kyrgyzstan through conducting a survey with the help of volunteers and to consider what can be done to improve the World Nomad Games in particular and to develop tourism in the country in general. The survey was originally developed in 2014 by Business Growth Initiative (BGI), one of the USAID projects I am currently involved in.

This year, we gathered 20 student volunteers selected on a competitive basis. Seven of them were our U.S.-CAEF fellows-- Altynai Melisova, Guliza Almazbek kyzy, Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy, Bekzhan Tashbaev, Kanat Osmonov, Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy and Azatbek Alibaev. I was so proud of our fellows, who stood out among other volunteers for their professionalism, communicativeness and discipline. In total, our volunteers surveyed about 4,000 tourists within five days of the event, and in recognition of the students' high-quality work on collection of survey data, each received an iPad mini 4 from BGI on September 19.

CAPSTONE INTERNS SHARE THEIR U.S. EXPERIENCES

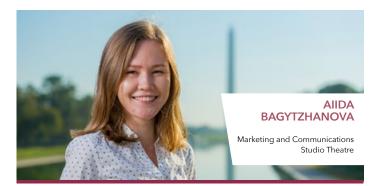
The U.S. International Capstone Internship program is an opportunity for recent U.S.-CAEF graduates to immerse themselves in the global business network. The program is specifically designed to help these individuals explore career options, gain valuable skills and make professional contacts.

Eight select interns are currently participating in The Washington Center's (TWC) postgraduate professional development program in Washington, D.C. In addition to their internships in local companies, fellows take part in professional workshops that focus on career growth and soft skills. Interns also receive 30-minute sessions of professional coaching to help them think more about career paths and ways to succeed, and conduct informational interviews with experts in the fields of their professional interests.,

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, establishing new relationships, and enjoying new life challenges. The quotes below reflect the interns' first impressions and thoughts about their Capstone experiences.



"SBA, having few analogous agencies anywhere in the world, is a very unique and influential agency in the federal government. The agency was created after President Eisenhower's initiative of the Small Business Act in 1953. Since then, many businesses have grown out of SBA's hub, receiving such aid as capital, contracting and counseling. It is hard to overestimate the agency's role in supporting the U.S. small businesses. The idea of creating a similar agency in Kyrgyzstan had been in my head before I learned about SBA; therefore, I was extremely excited to have an opportunity to intern at SBA, which could be potentially copied on a smaller scale in Central Asia."



"Studio is a very unique theatre which produces bold and daring contemporary art performances of modern classics. I am happy that I have taken this opportunity to do my internship at Studio. During my educational experience at KIMEP University and California State University, Bakersfield, my marketing instructors always talked about marketing for corporations and all the examples and case studies were mostly about FMCGs. But now, I am doing an internship for a lifestyle, nonprofit organization. This was a great challenge to accept since I am learning marketing from a different angle."



"Washington DC is a city of great opportunities! Every day I am inspired by meeting new people and learning about their successes...

Manchester Trade Limited Inc. where I am currently interning is an international trade policy and investment advisory firm. As part of my duties, I attend conferences and events in Washington, DC that are dedicated to international trade and investments. It is a very good chance to visit public and private organizations in DC and meet many successful people. I have already visited the National Endowment for Democracy, Ronald Reagan International Trade Center, and the Capitol; and attended The Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute Symposium, where I learned about free trade agreements between the USA and Hispanic countries and African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum, which was dedicated to the development of free trade agreements among African countries and the USA."



"One of my aspirations is to run an NGO promoting education in Kyrgyzstan. DC is great place to learn about NGOs, which I plan to do mainly through volunteering and informational interviews. Recently, I started volunteering as a Math mentor at Elliot-Hine Middle School, NE, DC through Higher Achievement, an afterschool program that provides a rigorous year-round learning environment for students during their critical middle school years.

Fundraising events are a big part of running a successful NGO. To learn how to best conduct such events I volunteered at the Greater Washington Heart Walk on October 1. I have also conducted an informational interview with Kristen King, Fundraising/Events Manager at TWC, who provided many valuable insights from her rich experience."



"PrepFactory provides high-quality standardized test preparation videos from the best instructors in America for free. My internship at PrepFactory has been a completely new experience for me as it is my first time working in the startup industry. Every chance to interact with my supervisor, who is also the founder of the startup, is very valuable for me. I find it especially interesting to learn about the entrepreneurial process from the founder's perspective.

As PrepFactory is based in the 1776 startup incubator, I have a chance to learn about its unique startup ecosystem. One of the biggest perks of 1776 is that it provides a great opportunity to network and meet new faces of the DC business community through its public events. The most valuable events for me were DC tech meet up (an event where representatives of the DC tech community had a chance to pitch theirs ideas) and Voices of Innovation Forum (an event to discuss and advance empowering women in entrepreneurship)."



"1776 is a dynamic business incubator that helps startups with various financial services, mentoring, and educational support. I can certainly say that I learn new things every day. Especially, this internship is giving me a lot in terms of soft skills. Maybe my technical skills and knowledge in finance are not being used fully, but my interpersonal and communication skills are definitely getting better.

Besides the internship, everything else is also going very well. I enjoy living in Washington, DC. My roommates are all Americans, which helps me learn about local culture. I really enjoy living at the Residential and Academic Facilities with them. I do learn a lot about American youth and their views-- it's fun."



"My internship site is located within a walking distance from the White House, the World Bank, IMF, and other world organizations, which makes me realize how lucky I am.

My supervisors, Stephen Lande and Anthony Caroll, are experienced professionals in the field of trade and investment. These people were at the roots of creating and implementing trade policies between the United States and African countries. Through my internship, I was able to broaden my knowledge about African countries and meet many interesting people.

Besides my internship at Manchester Trade, I find it very useful to attend free events at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the CATO Institute. On October 10, the U.S - Kyrgyzstan Business Council organized a roundtable meeting with government and private sector representatives from Kyrgyzstan, investors from the US and representatives of international organizations. Adel, Anisa and I had the unique opportunity to attend this private meeting and talk to the President of the Central Bank of Kyrgyzstan; the Minister of Finance; CEOs of KICB Bank, FINCA Bank, and RSK Bank; and the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic in the US."



"Overall, I am very pleased with my internship experience and atmosphere at 1776. Every Thursday we have leadership lunches where we learn more about the company from the employees. In addition, weekly meetings with the CFO give us a broader picture about the role of the Finance Department in the company's success. Moreover, there are myriads of different events, conferences and exhibitions to attend at 1776 and in Washington DC, so there is no room for boredom....

At TWC, every Friday we have Global Competencies class, which I find very beneficial, because it addresses issues relevant to students who have already graduated – to help them find their career path and excel professionally. Since it is a practical course, we have useful activities for professional development. For instance, we learned about the importance of emotional intelligence, which encouraged me to read a book about how to develop your EQ. In addition, TWC has assigned a coach to every student who helps you achieve three goals during your semester. I am very satisfied with the experience that I have gained so far, and I am sure that during this time in Washington DC, I will set clear and attainable career goals."





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