

NEWSLETTER

Ambassador Donald Lu ▶

U.S. AMBASSADOR TO
THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC
WITH **KALYS
ZHUMAKADYR
UULU** AND **ANISA
ATALOVA**, BUSINESS
BREAKFAST
FOUNDERS.

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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 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.

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

GRADUATION: CLASS OF 2019 AT A GLANCE

CELEBRATING

9th
COHORT

28
FELLOWS

14
KIMEP
UNIVERSITY

MAY 19
IN ALMATY,
KAZAKHSTAN

14
AUCA

JUNE 2
IN BISHKEK,
THE KYRGYZ
REPUBLIC

REPRESENTING 4 REPUBLICS OF CENTRAL ASIA:



11 Kyrgyz Republic
6 Kazakhstan
9 Tajikistan
2 Turkmenistan

Throughout their four years of study, the graduating Fellows have shown themselves to be true leaders and role models at their respective universities. Below are just a few of the many accomplishments of the graduating seniors.

Daniyar Abdiev, commonly referred to by his peers as a Math genius, has developed algorithms for Beeline telecommunications company that detect patterns in big data using machine learning techniques like deep neural networks or gradient boosting algorithms.

Alisher Murtazaev earned multiple prizes at various business competitions, including the CIMA Business Challenge, the Procter and Gamble CEO Challenge, L'Oréal Brand Storm, Unilever Clash of Sales and others.

Bekzhan Akbayev has served as editor-in-chief and president of KIMEP PIE, the first student magazine reporting on the territory of the CIS.

Elaman Saralayev, as an elected member of the student government, proposed several projects to improve student life at AUCA, such as adding more IT courses to the curriculum, introducing special awards for students representing Kyrgyzstan abroad, and installing charger boxes for cellphones at the university.

Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy, as President of the Youth Social Entrepreneurship Program, motivated U.S.-CAEF Fellows to carry out highly impactful charitable and educational projects that benefited youth, particularly orphans and children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Nigora Burhonova was chosen to represent Central Asia in the U.S. on two occasions- at the Study of U.S. Institutes (SUSI) on Women's Leadership Program in Auburn, WA, and the 44th Business Today International Conference in New York City.

Aleksandr Kinyakin and **Haknazar Hallyglyjov** each won two scholarships to study at universities in the USA and Austria.

Nilufar Umarova completed her 2nd internship with JYSK Tajikistan, to improve the company's social media pages and website by using skills she learned in digital marketing at KIMEP and the IMC University of Applied Sciences in Austria where she was an exchange student through the Ernst Mach Scholarship Program.

Meerim Moldaliev, in addition to being actively involved in student life at AUCA and volunteering in her native Kyrgyzstan and abroad, completed internships with six different companies, gaining valuable practical knowledge and contributing markedly to the success of these companies.

Begimai Bolotbekova, selected as one of the first UNICEF volunteers in Kyrgyzstan, raised awareness about safety in society by conducting multiple workshops at local schools.

Somon Mavlonazarov co-founded a food and supply delivery enterprise at the KIMEP dormitory.

Rustem Yesnazarov and **Mustafa Ziyatbekov** implemented a campus-wide sweatshirt fundraiser at KIMEP to support a U.S.-CAEF Fellow. In addition, Rustem has already secured employment with PwC, and Mustafa was recently included in the book "Best Students of Kazakhstan" organized by Elite company.

17 graduating seniors have been recognized on the **President's** and **Dean's Lists**.

8 Fellows are on track to graduate with honors

10 seniors have taken advantage of highly competitive, enriching study abroad programs in **Austria, France, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Turkey and the USA.**

LEARNING TO LEAD THROUGH NEW EXPERIENCES

DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

BY ALEKSANDR KINYAKIN



During my spring break, I took part in the Transformational Leadership Program (TLP), offered by E2 Educational Services.

TLP consists of three modules: The Leader Inside, The Leader and the Team, The Leader and the Organization. Executives and top managers of U.S. companies travel to Almaty to conduct coaching and leadership trainings for students and young professionals in Central Asia. Rick Gauthier, an IT manager for Amazon, conducted the first training on leadership and how to pitch your ideas on March 4-7 in U.S.-CAEF Hall at KIMEP. Afterwards, 50 TLP participants engaged in different group activities to test their leadership and teamwork skills and pitch their business ideas to potential investors. Working in a team can certainly be challenging. Nevertheless, our group made a successful presentation about an artificial reality application on the final day. More importantly, I truly enjoyed listening to the many innovative ideas of other participants. You grow around smart people.

The most exciting part of the program is that exceptional participants are selected to take part in a 12-18-month internship program at one of the top companies in Seattle. The program connects potential internship hosts with the participants of the training who have demonstrated the qualities, interests and skills that the company is looking for in interns.

LEARNING TO LEAD THROUGH NEW EXPERIENCES

MENTORING TECHNOVATION CHALLENGE PARTICIPANTS

BY SEZIM KANATOVA

Since January 2019, I have been mentoring participants of the Technovation Challenge international competition. Technovation is the world's largest technology entrepreneurship program for girls aged 10-18. Technovation offers girls around the world the opportunity to learn the skills they need to emerge as tech entrepreneurs and leaders.



Every year, they invite girls and mentors to identify a problem in their community, and then challenge them to solve it. I was chosen as one of 20 mentors to help young girls to implement their own ideas and launch their startups to solve one of the Millennium Development Goals. During this competition, I will guide 4 girls to successfully implement their mobile application. This application helps high school student and graduates find information about Kyrgyz universities supported with the rating system. I am responsible for all my mentees, and they are involved in such spheres as marketing, programming, and pitching. Different programmers and entrepreneurs around the world will test our application.

If our application meets the criteria and gets highly rated, we will present it in California, USA this summer. Throughout my mentorship, I was encouraged to help girls feel confident in the sphere of computer science, despite the cultural and social belief that boys are better in this field than girls. In addition, I've learned to be a good mentor, which means not solving mentees' problems, but guiding them, so that they can find a better solution to a problem.

WINNING THE TENDER

BY LIDIYA YAGODINA



In fall 2018, I was accepted to KIMEP Cinema, which makes movies and conducts events such as Cinema Verité (students create a short movie within 3 days). To receive approval and funds for such events, we had to present a proposal to the tender committee. Although I was a newcomer, I nominated myself for VP of Finance of KIMEP Cinema and led the proposal. I collected all the required documents for the proposal and presented it to the committee. The competition was very tough. Nevertheless, KIMEP Cinema was able to secure the required funds. Thanks to these efforts, KIMEP Cinema has already held its first event, which was really popular among the students.

LEARNING TO LEAD THROUGH NEW EXPERIENCES

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL YOUTH NETWORK

BY AIGUL SAPAROVA

In October 2018, I was selected as a member of Youth Council C5+1 (YC). YC is a platform for joint efforts to address common challenges faced by the United States and the five Central Asian countries. It complements bilateral relationships in the region, particularly in the areas where regional approaches may provide a comparative advantage. Since then, we have been working on promoting different projects in Kyrgyzstan.



Being part of Youth Council is helping me build a network with students in Central Asia and sharpen my knowledge of political and economic life of the region. On February 25, I participated in a discussion with the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Alice Wells, and the U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic, Donald Lu. During the meeting, we asked them questions regarding USA's interests in Central Asia and its position. First, I was a bit nervous to ask questions, but then I gained confidence thanks to open conversations, and I understood that as a citizen, I can make huge contributions to solving global issues.

One of the projects in which I am currently involved is organizing the Central Asian Youth Peace Talks Conference that will take place on March 23-24 at AUCA. Currently, I am working with the logistics and communication team. We are bringing together 45 students from Osh and Bishkek universities.

The idea of the project is to provide a platform for youth to share perspectives on the challenges of peace-building, especially regional approaches for countering radicalization and violent extremism in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

HONING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

JUMPing INTO THE BUSINESS WORLD

BY ALISHER MURTAZAEV

In December 2018, I decided to leave Toyota Motors Kazakhstan, where I had been interning in the Product Development Department for 8 months. After passing all five stages of the selection process for the JUMP Program, I received an internship offer from Japan Tobacco International (JTI). JUMP is a highly competitive, fast-paced internship program designed for graduating seniors and recent graduates.

JTI is a leading international tobacco manufacturer, which dominates the market of Kazakhstan. The company's focus is not only on developing the tobacco industry, but also motivating their employees by investing huge amounts of resources in the development process. The company provides an opportunity to experience the international environment and work outside your comfort zone. Since joining JTI, I have already completed an Excel and presentation skills training courses.

I am currently working in the Trade Marketing Department, where my main responsibilities include analyzing the effectiveness of different trade programs focused on increasing sales, which require advanced Excel skills. Overall, the tasks are challenging, but provide an amazing opportunity to grow. One of the biggest advantages is that all interns are treated as regular employees, which allows you to communicate and approach anyone regardless of their position in the company.

Four years at university will pass in the blink of an eye. An outstanding GPA is not the only criteria that companies are looking for. I encourage everyone to be active and start thinking about your professional career paths as early as possible, engage in extracurricular/internship activities that will help develop your soft and hard skills and expand your professional network.



HONING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

NAZIRAKHON (3RD FROM RIGHT)



WINNING A WAY TO P&G CEO CHALLENGE EUROPEAN FINALS

BY NAZIRAKHON KHOLTURAEVA

On February 19-20, P&G CEO Challenge for Eastern Europe and Central Asia was held in Moscow. After successfully completing the first three stages of the challenge (a reasoning test, online case study and interview), I was honored to participate in the Eastern Europe and Central Asian Cup, becoming one of the 32 out of 1,000 applicants that made it to the fourth stage. The participants were divided into teams of four by the organizers of the event. Each team had its own leader, and I was the leader of my team. During this stage, we worked on a business case on Gillette sales. The case was challenging, and it was hard to process all information and come up with the solution in 24 hours. However, because our leadership and teamwork helped optimize our work, our team was selected as the winner of this stage. We were awarded with a ticket to the European finals, which will take place in mid-April in Istanbul, Turkey. I highly encourage all U.S.-CAEF fellows to take advantage of such remarkable opportunities, which gave me a valuable and unforgettable experience.

EXPERIENCE WITH ProKg

BY AIANA RYSPEKOVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2018



Since the start of the year, I have been interning at the ProKG Club (the Club). The mission of the Club is to create a platform that unites professionals that inspire and guide young leaders.

My duties mainly include logistics and organizing recruitment for one of the programs of ProKG at 13 universities in Bishkek. This was my first experience working with different administrators at various universities. I was very pleased that my supervisor gave me this chance to improve my organizational skills. I have learned how to manage official documents. In addition, I had an amazing chance to improve my communication skills by arranging meetings with ProKG members and workshops at universities.

The main lesson I learned from this experience is that it is important to be organized and to plan everything step by step to avoid time conflicts or other risks, such as sudden changes in the availability of the speakers. Thus, before managing anything, I should have a clear plan. I believe this experience will contribute to my professional success, as I have plans to start my own business in the future.

HONING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

FINSTEPPE CHALLENGE

BY PALUAN RIMOV



The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), Exante and Refinitiv organized a trading competition among students of Kazakhstani universities called Finsteppe Challenge. The total number of students who participated in the competition was over 400. The main goal of the competition was to develop knowledge about financial markets. I created a team consisting of three students, including myself, and we called our team “BlackBull Capital.” The first tour was a trading simulation in Exante platform. In March, we traded stocks, exchange-traded fund (ETF) and currencies. During the first round, we raised about 38% of our portfolio. During the second round, we presented in writing the financial analysis of our portfolio and our trading strategy. We gathered 9 stocks from 3 different industries. The last round took place in Nur-Sultan (former Astana) where we presented our portfolio and trading strategy. Top 10 teams were invited to the final round from different cities of Kazakhstan. After all teams presented their portfolios, we earned 1st place and 500,000 KZT. I am very happy about this achievement.

AI IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES & MANAGEMENT HACKATHON

BY SEVARA TADZHIBAEVA

On January 18-19, I participated in Hackathon “AI in Government Services and Management” organized by Young Inventors Team and the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek. One of the keynote speakers at the event was Mr. Joe Dumoulin, Chief Technology and Innovation Officer at Verint Intelligent Self-Service.



Together with my team, we spent two sleepless nights coming up with an idea on how AI tools can help the Kyrgyz government. We found an innovative solution for government to work with the pension fund system and presented it in front of the tech and business experts.

From this experience, I learned how IT tools can help government and any business to function more efficiently. Moreover, this experience was another reminder for me that the real working world requires people to be quick and innovative. Another amazing insight is as business people, we should be strategic, meaning an innovative idea is not enough if there is no infrastructure or platform to realistically implement that idea. Overall, it was a great chance to enhance my business skills and build connections with tech experts. I believe such priceless opportunities will help me as I progress in my career.

VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

HELPING ORPHANS THROUGH ART

BY DILNAZ IMERAMZAYEVA

Recently, I arranged a series of master classes and games at orphanage #1. I was happy to be part of the project called “Mentors.” This project, organized by Dara charitable foundation, was created to help orphans expand their opportunities.



As a mentor of a group of young girls, I was responsible for conducting different interactive games and activities. One of the activities, in which my brother also participated and helped me, was “art therapy,” a creative way of enabling people to express their emotions through drawing. The activity helped the girls open up, communicate with each other and build a strong team spirit.

After receiving feedback from the members of my group, I realized that I was able to influence people in a positive way by motivating and empowering them to make actions that would open up big opportunities in their lives.

Thus, I was pleased to hear that the girls wanted to have another series of workshops on topics such as the importance of learning new languages, higher education opportunities, etc. I believe that my contribution and lectures based on my own experience would help these girls define their goals in life as well as assist them in choosing their future careers.



DILNAZ (CENTER) PAINTING WITH ORPHANS

VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

EXPANDING BUSINESS NETWORK THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

BY IMRAN ALIMOV

On November 29, I volunteered at the **International Investment Forum “Almaty Invest,”** which gathers about 1,000 high-ranking participants every year, including politicians, domestic and international business leaders, and heads of investment corporations, financial institutions and international organizations.



IMRAN ALIMOV (1ST ROW, 2ND FROM THE LEFT)

After passing a competitive selection process, I became a coordinator for a group of volunteers. We were responsible for registering all guests and participants from 38 countries, distributing handouts and badges, and providing them with all necessary information about the forum.

On February 1, I volunteered at **Digital Agenda Into the Globalization 2.0 Forum**. It is a forum dedicated to the innovation ecosystem of Eurasia organized by the Ministry of Information and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Government officials

from the country-members of the Eurasian Economic Union, international IT specialists, representatives of international organizations, politicians, scientists and businessmen took part in the Forum. They gathered to discuss the creation and development of a single innovation ecosystem of Eurasia aimed at realizing the technological potential of the countries. My task was to help Omar Mansoor Ansari, President of TechNation and Director of The Founder Institute, with logistical and other general issues. It was a wonderful opportunity to talk with Mr. Ansari, who has achieved so much, and to receive valuable advice that motivated me to achieve my goals.

VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

PROMOTING INDEPENDENT READING

BY NURMUKHAMMAD TURKBAEV

Currently, I am volunteering at UNICEF to promote education in Kyrgyzstan. My life mission is to be educated and to educate others, to gain knowledge and teach others. Thus, I organized a workshop at AUCA on February 22. The purpose of the session was to promote independent reading. The workshop was part of the campaign aimed at making Kyrgyzstan one of the top countries that reads the most books. We had around 250 participants from almost all universities of Bishkek.



EMPOWERING GIRLS

BY ALTYNAI NURALIEVA

Since fall of 2018, I have been volunteering for a project called "Atlas of Dreams," which is aimed at empowering girls of Kyrgyzstan. The project involves all seven oblasts of our country, and focuses on helping young female leaders believe in what they want to accomplish. I have been helping with the selection process. I was deeply touched by the girls' stories, how ambitious they are, and I felt that some of them might be future leaders of our country. I was so lucky to experience such a new side of the project. Now I am motivated to organize a social project involving children and teenagers.



SUPPORTING THE UK-KG TRADE MISSION

BY AVINA ABYTAEVA

On March 11-13, I volunteered at the UK-KG Trade Mission meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to help Kyrgyz companies to get connected with British companies. This event was held by the British Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic. I assisted Crown Agents. The company helps governments around the world to solve issues related to reducing poverty and improving healthcare by consulting local organizations and organizing workshops on improving public service. The experience was very rewarding, as I participated in important negotiations that led to several partnerships between Crown Agents and local companies. In addition, while working at the British Embassy, I met many interesting people who motivated me to strive for greater academic and professional success.



VOLUNTEERING & COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

NOMAD UNIVERSE, A ROLE MODEL OF UNITY

BY NURSHOOLA AIBEK KYZY

On March 9–20, I was honored to volunteer at the world’s largest ethnofestival, “Nomad Universe,” in Saudi Arabia. This was the first global event organized by the King Abdulaziz, Camel Club and the World Ethnogames Confederation of the Kyrgyz Republic. Similar to the World Nomad Games held in Kyrgyzstan in 2018, the festival brought together participants from 90 countries to showcase their unique traditions. According to the official data, close to 1,200 Kyrgyz people took part in this festival. It was the first time that such a large number of Kyrgyz people represented our country abroad.



I was part of the Intellectual Games Committee. My responsibility was to explain to visitors the rules of “Toguz Korgol,” a traditional Kyrgyz board game. Since this game requires some math skills, many people found it interesting. In addition, we provided master classes that were held in Kyrgyz yurts, which created a unique cultural environment and added a fun element to the activity. Competitions were held in other yurts. Participants from around 40 countries took part in the championship.



NURSHOOLA AIBEK KYZY (CENTER)

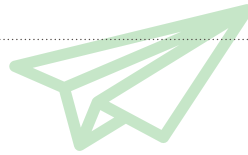


During our free time, we had an opportunity to explore the huge ethno-complex, which consisted of different villages and stages for cultural performances. It was amazing to learn about different cultures.

I hope this festival will have an indelible mark on the history of our nation and the relations we created with other countries will strengthen year by year.

UNIVERSITY LIFE

U.S.-CAEF Fellows have demonstrated not only academic excellence and commitment to the development of the vibrant business environment in Central Asia, but also their ability to serve as campus leaders through their active involvement in student activities reflecting their diverse interests and talents.



JOINING KIMEP TIMES

BY DILRABO SAIDALIEVA

I joined KIMEP Times, an independent student newspaper at KIMEP University, during my freshman year. I managed to complete a couple tasks bestowed upon me; however, my work did not make it to the printed paper.

During my second year, I was determined to write and get published. I knew I loved writing and I was not awful at it- I only needed to overcome procrastination. In the special edition, the 131st issue, I successfully wrote a massive article filling a full page and was tenacious enough to write a second, smaller article as well.



I was so proud that I took a printed issue to Tajikistan over the winter break and showed it to my parents. Although they could not read much from my articles as they were written in English, they cheered and praised my work. As soon as the spring semester commenced, the chief editor of KIMEP Times extended an offer to me to become a content editor, given my previous work and potential.

I am elated to say that for the 132nd issue of KIMEP Times, which may get published in April, I have written another article and edited a total of fourteen other articles. This, perhaps, was also another test since shortly after I finished editing, I was added to the group chat KIMEP Times Heads- that's when I knew I was a valued member of the organization.

I am humbled by this opportunity and am looking forward to serving my community further through writing and editing.

KIMEP AWARDS 2018

BY ALUA CHYNTEMIROVA



On February 7, as a member of the Finance and Show Program departments of the student council, I helped organize KIMEP Awards 2018, which is an annual event when students choose Lady of the Year, Gentleman of the Year, and Sportsman of the Year. The winners were selected based on student voting held prior to the event. However, the main purpose of the KIMEP Awards is charity. This year, the organization raised funds to support Zalina, a young cancer patient who herself generously contributed to our last year's event.

UNIVERSITY LIFE

CONGRATULATIONS TO FRESHMEN FARING WELL IN SPORTS COMPETITIONS

Several KIMEP fellows fared well in chess and table tennis competitions. Fellows credit their successes to their perseverance, strong competitive spirit and positive attitude.

1ST PLACES IN CHESS & TABLE TENNIS COMPETITIONS

“Although I won several republican and city chess tournaments in Tajikistan, I had not had a chance to test my skills on the international arena until recently, when I became a chess champion among all students in Almaty. All opponents were well prepared; however, my desire to win helped me overcome all obstacles. Almaty also became the place where I received my first golden medal in table tennis. The semifinal match was the most difficult, as I had to face my own brother, who is also a U.S.-CAEF Fellow. I was able to beat him in the 5th round. After defeating him, I won the final match and secured the coveted title.”



ERADZH NASRIDINOV

2ND PLACE IN TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENT

“I have been taking ping-pong classes since the first semester and participated in different ping-pong challenges. Because I kept trying, I have finally reached my goal. This is not just an achievement for me but a life lesson that taught me not to give up and learn from my failures.”



ZEVAR MAMADJONOVA

3RD PLACE IN CHESS TOURNAMENT

“I used to play chess in my childhood. So, when I heard about the competition, I became excited and decided to try my luck, though I had not been in a competition in 10 years. My positive attitude helped me earn 3rd place. I am glad that I believed in myself and took this chance.”



DARIYA MUSTAFINOVA

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

NOTABLE GUESTS:

- 14-FEB **EMIL UMETALIEV**, FOUNDER, KYRGYZ CONCEPT

- 18-FEB **AZIS ABAKIROV**, FOUNDER, UNIQUE TECHNOLOGIES

- 11-MAR **DENIS GAIVARONSKIY**, CEO, «KULIKOVSKY» CONFECTIONERY HOUSE

- 20-MAR **SERGEI EGOROV**, CHIEF STRATEGIC OFFICER, “NUR TELEKOM”

- 27-MAR **AKMAL MALAYEV**, CFO, “SKY MOBILE”

- 02-APR **ELENA SOBOLEVA**, CO-FOUNDER “HONORLOCK”

- 10-APR **MUTLU OCAK**, CEO, COCA-COLA BISHKEK BOTTLERS

- 24- APR **AMBASSADOR DONALD LU**, U.S. EMBASSY IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

THE SUCCESS OF **BISHKEK** BREAKFAST MEETINGS HAS LED TO A PUSH TO IMPLEMENT SIMILAR MEETINGS IN **DUSHANBE & ALMATY**.

BUSINESS BREAKFAST MEETINGS

WITH BUSINESS LEADERS,
U.S.-CAEF FELLOWS & ALUMNI

BY SENIOR AIZHAN KERIMBEK KYZY & CONNOR LUCE, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

PROVIDED
ADVICE &
EXPERTISE

37 ALUMNI AND
CURRENT FELLOWS
ATTENDED MEETINGS

In search of a way to promote professional development and networking among current U.S.-CAEF Fellows and Alumni, **Kalys Zhumakadyr uulu** (AUCA '14) and **Anisa Atalova** (AUCA '16) came up with what has undoubtedly the Alumni Association's crowning achievement in 2019 thus far. ▶

8 MEETINGS
IN THE LAST
2 MONTHS

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

The pair, along with their fellow Alumni Officers, began arranging a series of 'Breakfast Meetings' meant to encourage networking and creativity among alumni and current Fellows. Each Breakfast Meeting consists of a small group of U.S.-CAEF alumni and current Fellows meeting for breakfast in Bishkek, joined by a prominent business leader in the region, who provides advice and expertise about the industry. The meetings have proved to be a tremendous success.

Though the meetings are limited to a relatively small number of attendees in order to keep the atmosphere intimate, 37 alumni and current Fellows have taken advantage of these unique opportunities. Of those, nearly a third have attended multiple meetings.

These numbers indicate not only that business leaders in the region see great potential in U.S.-CAEF scholars and graduates, but that those within the U.S.-CAEF community are taking active steps to improve their professional development and networking skills.

In addition to learning about the business environment in Central Asia in the meetings, Fellows and alumni also gain the unique opportunity to learn about the personal lives and struggles of the leaders with whom they meet.

Kalys and Anisa have taken the lead on contacting the business leaders and inviting them to the meetings, while **Aizhan Kerimbek kyzy** (AUCA '19) coordinates the logistics of the meetings and gathers event attendee feedback. Their hard work has clearly paid off, as demonstrated by the high praises offered from many of the attendees. ►



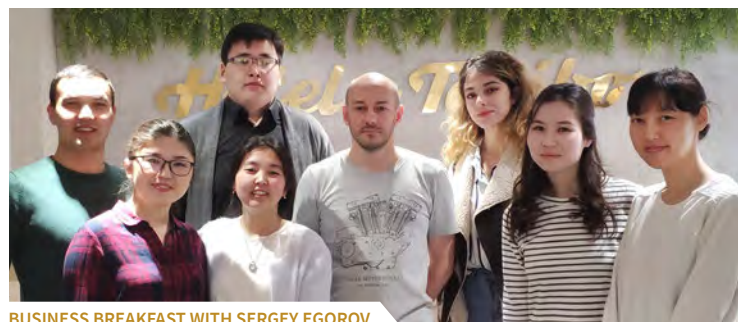
AKMAL MALAYEV



MUTLU-OCAK



BUSINESS BREAKFAST WITH AZIS ABAKIROV



BUSINESS BREAKFAST WITH SERGEY EGOROV



BUSINESS BREAKFAST WITH DENIS GAIVARONSKIY

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED



BUSINESS BREAKFAST WITH EMIL UMETALIEV

After the first Breakfast Meeting, which took place on February 14 with special guest **Emil Umetaliev** (Founder of the one-stop travel agency Kyrgyz Concept, co-founder of several educational projects including Bishkek International School, and ex-Minister of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic), attendee **Nurshoola Aibek kyzy** shared:

“Considering that [Mr. Umetaliev] is a person who leads various companies in Bishkek, I thought he would be in a hurry and leave us after an hour or so. However, for two hours he calmly talked about various interesting topics such as EQ standards, family relations and social models. Moreover, all of them were explained through multiple examples which he provided from his own life. Some of them were funny, others a little bit shocking, but what united them all were small pieces of wisdom in each example. I truly enjoyed this time with him and my other Fellows. I hope to see and meet with more people like him.”

Another standout Breakfast Meeting took place with **Elena Soboleva**, Co-Founder of Honorlock LLC and U.S.-CAEF and AUCA alumna (Class of 2011) herself on April 2. Since creating Honorlock in 2014, Elena and her team have received over \$4 million from investors and have applied for several patents. Academic institutions in both the U.S. and abroad use Honorlock’s proctoring solutions, and some of the world’s leading publishers, including Pearson and McGraw-Hill Education, have praised its effectiveness.

Attendees at the meeting appreciated Elena’s positive energy and her genuine interest in the topics that she was discussing. They also found her ability to come from meager beginnings to achieve such success impressive and inspiring.

“Despite her very tight schedule and short visit to Bishkek, Elena found time to share her experience with U.S.-CAEF fellows and alumni. Elena shared a very important lesson about risks. Elena has taken so many risks in her life and it all paid off, even though in the beginning all of her ambitions seemed crazy and unclear.

However, due to her hard work and passion, everything worked out better than she had ever imagined.”

-Anisa Atalova



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

More recently, Alumni officers used their connections to arrange a Breakfast Meeting with **Donald Lu**, U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. Despite being scheduled for just over one hour, Ambassador Lu met with the alumni and Fellows for almost two hours at Tchibo coffee shop. In addition to Ambassador Lu, Cultural Affairs Officer **Cori Bickel** and USAID Senior Economic Development Advisor **Paul Hamlin** were also in attendance.

Ambassador Lu showed genuine interest in the attendees, asking each of the five current Fellows and ten alumni to share their stories about how they came to apply for U.S.-CAEF and what jobs, internships, and activities in which they were currently involved.

The Ambassador was very supportive of U.S.-CAEF, and he emphasized the importance of highlighting the program to those at the State Department to secure more funding.



CORI BICKEL



PAUL HAMLIN



AMBASSADOR DONALD LU

"I have learned one important lesson from [The Ambassador's] stories- what is destined to the fate is sure come true, but only if you work very hard and have a dream. In addition, it was very amusing to hear his vision and plans as an Ambassador to develop and improve the business atmosphere in Kyrgyzstan.

In my opinion, Ambassadors are the bridges between the politicians in the country and prospective investors, and their vision and plans may play a huge role in developing the business and economy of the country. Moreover, I noticed that the Ambassador really cares for the future of business in Kyrgyzstan and for the Kyrgyz youth. This Breakfast was very interactive, Mr. Ambassador was very interested to hear our vision and opinion on development of business, and on how young professionals are contributing to the business sector in Kyrgyz Republic."

-Guliza Almazbek kyzy

The Breakfast Meetings serve as a shining example of the creativity and initiative of the Alumni Association officers. Alumni and current Fellows have been deeply inspired meeting with successful businesspeople and learning about how their values have shaped their career path. Perhaps above all, the meetings serve as a reminder to U.S.-CAEF participants that if they stay committed to their goals, they, too, can be in a position to advise and support young leaders one day.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

EXPANDING HORIZONS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: INTERVIEW WITH ALISHER MAMUNOV

BY MEERIM ZHANYBEK KYZY AND UULZHAN AITNAZAROVA

Alisher Mamunov, AUCA'15, an outstanding U.S.-CAEF alumni with brilliant time-management skills, is currently working three jobs- he is a full-time web developer at Sunrise Studio in Bishkek; a part-time, remote employee at AKKA-Aviation Service, where he manages and supervises aircraft ground handling for flights to the airports in Bishkek, Issyk-Kul and Osh operated by international private jets; and a teacher of Introductory Computer Science for high school and undergraduate students at AUCA. He was able to accomplish all this through self-learning, never-ending curiosity and hard work. ►



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

HOW DO YOU MANAGE MULTIPLE JOBS?

I try to follow the rule “Work while you are not sleeping, and sleep while you are not working.” I cannot always fully stick to this rule, but I try my best. I was able to manage my schedule so that I could teach after 7 pm on weeknights and on weekends. In addition, I try to do my remote work as quickly and accurately as possible.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU FACE WHILE WORKING MULTIPLE JOBS? HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THEM?

I received 50 calls per hour for several hours when President Putin was visiting our country. My smart watch showed 35,000 steps a day (between airplanes) when the Global Nomad Games took place, and it stayed that way for three days. At my full-time job, I was once overloaded with four projects that had deadlines during the same week. At AUCA, I once taught in three different computer labs at the same time on different floors, as we expected 20 students, and 60+ students showed up for “Hour of Coding.” I just jumped into the work, used every opportunity for help, and didn’t panic. My motto from the university times has been “Do what is within your abilities, the rest is not your direct responsibility.” It helps not to get stressed too much.

WHAT JOB YOU ENJOY MOST?

I enjoy all of them. I was told once that those who start working in aviation stay forever in aviation. Now I agree with that. Teaching youth makes me feel useful and, and that I am helping make meaningful change. I hope my students will be brilliant in the IT careers. Finally, my full-time job is like my hobby. Teaching at the university and my full-time job complement each other and help me learn new knowledge and grow.

AS A BUSINESS MAJOR, HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN THE TECH FIELD?

I wanted to use my business management skills in entrepreneurship after graduating from AUCA, but realized that I needed additional knowledge; therefore, I took three MIT online courses through edX on entrepreneurship, which were fantastic and free (I would really recommend them to everybody).

For the final project, I had to create my own mobile application which turned up very challenging, as I lacked knowledge in IT. So, I took the CS50 Harvard online course, which I found fascinating and interesting. It helped me transition to the IT sphere smoothly and turned me into an IT specialist. Now, I feel more accomplished. I think IT knowledge is necessary for all U.S.-CAEF and AUCA students, just like English was and still is.

CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY RESOURCES FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO GAIN SOME TECH SKILLS?

I would recommend starting with a web design. FreeCodeCamp is a good starting point for self-learning. You could also take the Harvard CS50 course. It is completely free, and you can study it at your own pace. Udacity is also a great resource for studying for free. They also suggest nanodegrees in very diverse tech spheres like Artificial Intelligence, Mobile Application Development, Web Development, etc.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

I would like to link my CS skills to my economics and business background. Possibly, I will pursue a master’s degree in data science in the future. I would also like to gain experience by working remotely as a data scientist and web developer for an international company.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

TRANSITIONING FROM CORPORATE TO STARTUP EXPERIENCE

BY RUSTAM VAKHOBOV, KIMEP'15, SENIOR FINANCIAL AUDITOR, PRIME CAPITAL HOLDING

I started working at Deloitte Touche LLP in Atyrau as a financial auditor right after my graduation in 2015. I acted as a senior auditor on several large international projects in mining and oil and gas sectors in Kazakhstan and abroad. I quickly became involved in many large projects, and was transferred to the Almaty office in 2017.

I started working at Deloitte Touche LLP in Atyrau as a financial auditor right after my graduation in 2015. I acted as a senior auditor on several large international projects in mining and oil and gas sectors in Kazakhstan and abroad. I quickly became involved in many large projects, and was transferred to the Almaty office in 2017.

While working at Deloitte, I gained valuable experience leading audit engagements in JSC Arcelor Mittal Kazakhstan, one of biggest metal producers in the world. Moreover, I was in the position of Key Auditor in Engagements, which made a global impact with such companies as North Caspian Operating Company (NCOC), which is the first company that mantled the oil drilling rig in the Caspian Sea in Kazakhstan. Upon successful completion of the project, I was invited to share my expertise in engagements of ENI and Shell Kazakhstan as a lead audit specialist.

Later in 2017, I left Deloitte in order to work in the airline sphere, and I found employment as a financial manager with QAZAQ Air, an Almaty-based national airline operating



under the sovereign wealth fund of Kazakhstan. I was involved in the optimization of expenses, improving internal controls and building a business outlook for the company. I have gained more in-depth experience in making financial modeling and forecasting the low-cost airline market in Kazakhstan, working closely with leading airline consulting company Lufthansa Consulting.

In November 2018, I received a job offer from Prime Capital Holding in Almaty, one the most well-regarded companies in the sector of private

equity. I have served as senior financial auditor, mainly providing audit in various spheres such as Horeca, agriculture and retail markets, implementing my expertise in financial auditing according with International Audit Standards (IAS), and financial reporting according to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Along with my current position, a couple colleagues (who also come from a consulting background) and I opened a company called **Silk Bridges LLP**. We provide management consulting and commodity brokerage services and provide full support of the supply of non-ferrous metals. We provide full financial, legal and management advice from the beginning with negotiations on significant terms of transactions, transportation and payment terms and to all issues accompanying the supply of goods. Currently, we have received the official mandate status of one national Chinese company for buying non-ferrous metals, and we have closed a couple deals in purchasing copper cathode, zinc and aluminum ingots.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

BREAKING INTO THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

BY BAHTIYAR JALILOV, KIMEP'14, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, TRIBALANDS, ALUMNI COORDINATOR IN TURKMENISTAN

“Simple yet addictive game. Has all the right ingredients.”

- a Google user



I became interested in mobile applications and games during my master's program in France in 2015. I realized that mobile applications and games were generating billions of dollars annually. In 2016, my friend and I spent several months researching the mobile game development process. By the end of 2016, we had developed a simple 2D endless running game. We quickly realized we would not be able to implement all our ideas in the game due to a lack of experience and resources, so we came up with a new game, a puzzle game with simple mechanics and objectives. By the end of September 2018, we were able to finish our puzzle game, and launched a test version in Google Store on September 21, 2018. On December 31, 2018 the game was officially publicly released in Google Store. The game currently has over 1,000 installations and offers localizations in two languages. Our next goal is to reach 10,000 installations on the game, and to develop a new action game. Our current game can be downloaded from Google Play for free, and it is called Fuzzies – Color Lines. We welcome reviews and support from our Fellows.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

ENCOURAGING ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES IN KAZAKHSTAN

BY TEMUR UTEGENOV, KIMEP'12, FOUNDER AND CEO, "UTEGENOV T.M."

I have been running a business in the field of auto transportation since 2016. My company provides services for delivering goods within CIS countries. Delivery of goods are performed in regular trucks which can take up to 20 tons and 130 square meters in volume. We do not own our own trucks, but we work on an agreement basis with shipping companies or private carriers who do own trucks. My company's revenue was over 10 million KZT (\$30,200) in 2016, 26.6 million KZT (over \$74,000) in 2017 and 75 million (\$197,674.03) in 2018. The net income is about 5% of revenue. The number of clients has been steadily increasing in spite of the tough economic situation in the country. Thanks to my financial background, I do all accounting and tax reports by myself. Besides, I do all negotiations with partners and forecast transportation rates for different directions. Apart from delivering high quality services to customers, we help improve cooperation between small logistics companies of Kazakhstan. We've created an online chat and actively engage with logistics professionals and exchange information and recommendations on specific carriers or customers. Unfortunately, logistics is the type of business where it is easy to commit fraud. As soon as we hear about any fraud case, we learn the details and alert our partners immediately. We also help improve the Kazakhstani website fa-fa.kz to make it more user friendly. As a result, many carrier and logistics companies started recognizing us, which makes it easier to do business, and more importantly, to promote business development in the country.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

ACCELERATING PROSPERITY THROUGH UPSHIFT

BY ZUHRO GANJIBEKOVA, AUCA'18, PROJECT ANALYST & SHAHLO JONMAMADOVA, KIMEP'18, FINANCE ASSISTANT AT ACCELERATE PROSPERITY

A shared passion for social innovation brought us, two U.S.-CAEF alumni from different partner universities, to Accelerate Prosperity, a non-governmental organization in Khorog that provides support to businesses in Tajikistan through acceleration processes. Both of us have been involved in a social program called UPSHIFT, which was recently launched by Accelerate Prosperity in partnership with UNICEF Tajikistan.

UPSHIFT was created in response to the needs of the most disadvantaged young people. For the last decade, the youth unemployment rate in Tajikistan has been on the rise, despite an overall improvement in economic conditions.

The objectives of the program are to help youth unleash their creative potential and engage them in social entrepreneurship projects that bring innovative solutions to complex challenges in their own communities. Some of the examples include such projects as waste management, water sanitation, development of university online platforms, etc.

On February 23-26, 2019, we conducted a 4-day boot-camp for thirty adolescents and youth. During the training, the participants



ZUHRO GANJIBEKOVA

learned to identify challenges in their communities and find entrepreneurial solutions to them.

They also worked on developing planning and budgeting skills, as well as presentation and pitching skills. Upon completion of the workshop, the groups pitched their projects to an independent steering committee. The shortlisted projects, currently in the mentorship stage, will receive small grants for the implementation of their ideas.

In April 2019, we launched the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation workshop to reach out to and engage adolescents through education, youth development and peace building initiatives. The participants are our potential UPSHIFT fellows.

“Through participation in different business programs, I became interested in helping young individuals in my country to solve problems and make money. Therefore, I was excited to become an UPSHIFT mentor... Through this program, I met many young people who are willing to set a positive example and make an impact on their society. We do not expect that important issues will be eliminated overnight, but these people give me hope that with a good team, positive changes are always possible.”



SHAHLO JONMAMADOVA

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

IMPORTANCE OF WEAK TIES

BY BATIMA MYRZABEKOVA, KIMEP'16, FLEX PROGRAM ASSISTANT, AMERICAN COUNCILS

Last year, I found an incredibly inspiring book called “The Defining Decade” by Meg Jay, an American clinical psychologist with more than 30 years of experience, who motivates youth to spend their 20s in the most effective way. My favorite part of this book was the emphasis on ‘weak ties,’ which has a pure reflection in my life.



Her argument is that young people who are attempting to define themselves both professionally and personally should reach out to those people they do not know well to help find opportunities for growth and development.

The author writes, “*Weak ties are people we have met, or are connected to somehow, but do not currently know well. Weak ties are also our former employers or professors and other associations not promoted to close friends . . . Weak ties give us access to something fresh . . . like bridges you cannot see all the way across, so there is no telling where they might lead.*” According to this theory, acquaintances are usually more influential than close friends because “. . . ‘weak ties’ tend to be the best sources of employment, and a large network of weak ties gives you the broadest reach and greatest perspective, instead of a few very close ties.”

Therefore, Above and Beyond, a 5-week workshop sponsored by the FLEX Alumni Association, was a great platform for me to share this theory with young ladies who aspire to start their own businesses in Kazakhstan. I was honored to be a motivational speaker at one of the sessions on February 9. I shared my personal story with the participants, how ‘weak ties’ helped me become a FLEX and U.S.-CAEF finalist, receive a Korean government scholarship, work with different organizations, and find my passion for the education field. I told the participants how vital it is to be open and engage with other people because you never know what role the person you meet can play in your future. I motivated them to be optimistic and encouraged them to meet new people and build connections with them, even during this project, as people at this workshop- organizers, speakers, and the project participants themselves- could potentially be ‘weak ties’ who might influence their lives in the future.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

UNITED BY A COMMON GOAL: ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INTERNS

The new alumni leadership team decided to hire eight current fellows from both partner universities to serve as interns for the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association. The interns will act as liaisons between alumni and current fellows and provide a fresh perspective to the Alumni Association, and assist current officers in arranging events, gathering information, and conducting outreach with various alumni. Though, in some cases, several years separate the interns from the current Alumni officers in age, the common goal of promoting and supporting the U.S.-CAEF community will undoubtedly unite them.



KIMEP UNIVERSITY ALUMNI INTERNS

The fellows selected as interns in Bishkek are **Aigul Saparova**, **Aiana Rysbekova**, and **Sezim Kanatbekova**, each of whom is a freshman business administration major at AUCA. In Almaty, the selected interns are four freshmen **Alua Chyntemirova**, **Imran Alimov**, **Zevar Mamadjonova**, **Aruyel Nurbekova**, and sophomore **Abduvohidkhuja (Abdu) Qodirov** from KIMEP University. ▶



AUCA ALUMNI INTERNS

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

CONTINUED

The quotes below show the interns' motivation and excitement for serving with the Alumni Association:

"I considered becoming an Alumni Council Assistant as the perfect way for me to build a huge network and gain experience that will allow me to enhance my leadership skills in helping my community."



AIGUL

"The Alumni Association is a great opportunity to feel the U.S.-CAEF family spirit. Each member of U.S.-CAEF family is unique; every one of them has a great and challenging experience. I joined the Alumni Association as an intern, because it connects like-minded alumni from Central Asia. I would love to learn about them."



SEZIM

"Thanks to the U.S.-CAEF grant, I have already explored so many things that are helping me to grow. I am eager to make new connections with the U.S.-CAEF alumni and learn from their experiences.

Through my involvement in the alumni activities, I would love to improve my digital communication, organizational and finance skills. I am looking forward to contributing to U.S.-CAEF with all my heart!"



AINA

"I joined the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association because I saw it as an amazing opportunity to learn about the experience of successful graduates who faced many different things and overcame many problems. I believe that they are very good examples of

what should I strive for. By talking with these people I will be better prepared for future life."



IMRAN

"An internship with the Alumni Association is a chance for me to get to know other scholars and graduates closer through activities which can help develop and use my communication, leadership and team working skills."



ZEVAR

"Through my involvement with the Association I can gain useful experience, which can radically change my life for the better. I can be in the company of sociable, successful, and self-sufficient

people, which will push me develop myself further. I would like to learn some important tips on how to communicate with people correctly, and what you need to do to achieve a brilliant career. I think every little tip will open a door to something bigger."



ALUA

"I want to give back through my contribution to the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association. I would like to engage in activities that would help foster relationships among fellows, alumni and the Board. Through organizing alumni events, I can develop professionally and improve my communication skills."



ABDU

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