

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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GROWING THROUGH CHALLENGES & EXPERIENCE

SUPER ACCOUNTANT 2015

BY DANA KUSSAIN, KIMEP JUNIOR

During the fall 2015 semester, I participated in the 3rd Super Accountant annual competition organized by the Paragraph Business School, Chamber of Professional Accountants of the Republic of Kazakhstan, ACCOUNTANT Information System and Accountant and Taxes BIN.KZ. Several thousand professional accountants and current students took part in this largescale event to compete for the title of the best accountant of Kazakhstan. The competition included two rounds and lasted for almost three months from September to December. During each round, participants were expected to submit answers to questions and solve cases related to the accounting sphere. The selection was held in three categories: "Best Accountant in the Business Sector", "Best Accountant in the Public Sector" and "Best Finance Student".

The results were announced during the award ceremony held in Almaty Towers on December 22, 2015. More than 1,500 accountants gathered from different regions of Kazakhstan at this festive event. I was delighted to receive the title of the Best Accountant 2015 among student participants. In addition, I received a 500,000 tenge (equivalent of \$1,320) scholarship from the Paragraph Business School and an iPAD mini.

For me this experience is very valuable because I am majoring in Accounting. It gave me a huge sense of accomplishment and boosted my confidence. I am planning to use my scholarship to take advanced accounting courses to enhance my professional knowledge and skills further.

I am grateful to U.S.-CAEF for giving me an opportunity to study what I love and what I am passionate about at the best university in Central Asia.

TOP TALENTS

BY ANISA ATALOVA, AUCA SENIOR



TOP Talents is a unique project organized by AIESEC, an international student organization, that allows students to work on solving real business cases of leading companies in the country.

Two of our U.S.-CAEF Fellows, Guliza Almazbek kyzy and Adylbek Dzhapashov, became finalists of one of AIESEC's major programs - Top Talents. Top Talents aims to bring together experienced professionals and youth to encourage the exchange of knowledge and promote innovation and opportunities for growth. After the demanding competition, which included business games and interviews, Adylbek and Guliza were among the 40 best business students, selected from among 300 participants from all over Kyrgyzstan, to take part in the final stage of the competition. All finalists were divided into teams to work on marketing projects for leading companies in Kyrgyzstan.

Guliza's team worked for Namba Media and Namba Taxi, which are the fastest growing innovative companies in the country. Guliza's team worked and came up with original solutions to two existing problems of the companies, which required thorough research of the market and field work. Although her team didn't win the competition, Guliza enjoyed her work with Namba a lot: "It was a great experience for us as we had to use our business knowledge. The experience also taught me to be flexible and work in a team". Guliza was also pleased that her team was offered internships with these companies.

Adylbek's team worked on a project with Air Manas Company. Adylbek's team also conducted thorough marketing research for Air Manas, mainly focusing on the recent re-branding and expansion of the company to other countries. The company representatives were highly impressed

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ANISA ATALOVA

Anisa is an outstanding AUCA senior who has demonstrated academic excellence and impressive leadership abilities. Anisa was selected to participate in the Youth Leadership and Interfaith Conference in Orlando, Florida in 2012; she received first place honors in several local and international debate tournaments in 2013 and 2014. She also gained valuable experience through her work for two local NGOs in Osh: at the NGO Project, she helped twelve youth councils develop their capacity, and at the NGO IRET, she assisted the financial manager and created a new system for operating accounting information. In 2014, Anisa interned in the HR department of the US Embassy in Bishkek and contributed to the success of her department by redesigning the HR internal website and was offered the position of administrative clerk that she held until June 2015. Several months ago, using the knowledge and skills she had gained through her studies and work experiences, Anisa created her own startup, a cosmetics shop, "Let's Makeup." She now has three staff members and her business venture is operating well. In recognition of her remarkable achievements, the Foundation selected Anisa to participate in the fall 2016 U.S. Capstone Internship program in Washington, DC.

with the marketing plan suggested by Adylbek's team. As a reward, the team was offered round-trip tickets to Deli. "It was a great challenge for us to work with the AirManas company for a month. The case that we worked on was mainly on the topic of marketing and development of new ideas. After a month of hard work our team, to our own surprise, won tickets to India. Personally, I have never flown on a plane nor have I ever left the boundaries of Kyrgyzstan. It was a very unique and

interesting experience for me. And the fact that India was the first country I visited produced much more positive experience. Our trip lasted for a week. And this week was a very eventful time for us. We saw the Taj-Mahal, elephants, a lot of temples, and Red Fort. I am very grateful for the time I have spent in India because it opened a lot of new ideas and opportunities that will surely help me in my future career," -wrote Adylbek.



INTERNSHIP AT CITIBANK

BY YERASSYL TOLEUGAZINOV, KIMEP SENIOR

In the fall semester, I interned in the Almaty branch of Citibank Kazakhstan. Citibank entered the Kazakhstani market in 1998, and today it is regarded as a leading international bank. In 2009, Citibank Kazakhstan was named the Best Cash Management Bank by Euromoney, and the Best Corporate Internet Bank by Global Finance.

As Citibank Kazakhstan serves only corporate clients and financial institutions, learning about the bank's services was of particular interest to me. The internship in the Treasury Operations Unit of the bank was a great chance for me to gain valuable professional experience, apply my theoretical knowledge, and most importantly, learn about the bank's structure and operations from inside.

Citibank has a special corporate culture, and the ethical standards of the bank are very high. Being part of this team was extremely useful for my growth as a young finance professional. I am grateful to my co-workers for their support throughout the internship. Every time I had questions, they were ready to answer them. On my part, I tried to learn as much as possible, and I hope I made a positive contribution to my department's work. This internship gave me an opportunity to have clear understanding and to discover all nuances of working in the banking sphere, therefore after completing the internship I knew what I needed to focus my studies on. I would definitely recommend this internship to other U.S.-CAEF fellows because the experience it provides is essential for professional growth.



GROWING WITH THE KIMEP TIMES

BY ZARRINA MULLOBOEVA, KIMEP JUNIOR | MANAGING EDITOR OF KIMEP TIMES

"Every article I wrote challenged me to experiment and explore. One of my favorite things about writing for KT is the flexibility in choosing a topic for articles."



First, I had a chance to get a copy of The KIMEP Times (KT) newspaper during a presentation at my high school. Representatives of KIMEP University brought a few copies of the newsletter all the way to Tajikistan. It was then when I learned about KIMEP's vibrant and fascinating student life and wanted to be part of it.

KT is an independent student newspaper founded in 1995. It highlights major events, projects and people at KIMEP as well as offers insights into topics related to the student life. The newspaper unites students passionate about storytelling, photography and design from various departments. KT has won the award for "Best Corporate Newspaper" for the last few years.

I joined KT as a reporter during my freshman year. Since then, I have contributed articles to more than 11 issues of the newspaper. Every article I wrote challenged me to experiment and explore. One of my favorite things about writing for KT is the flexibility in choosing a top-



ic for articles. Depending on my interests and curiosity at the time, I wrote about zero-waste lifestyle, long-distance relationships, customer service, cheating culture, and interviewed Dr. Bang, KIMEP students and faculty.

Eventually, I became involved in editing articles, mentoring newcomers and helping with managing the newspaper. Last fall, I was promoted to the managing editor's position. In this role, I cooperate with KIMEP administration, do budgeting,

communicate with the printing house, and have to deal with some bureaucratic issues which helped me see the other side of this project. Definitely, my experience with KT helped me grow personally and professionally.

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

A YEAR IN TURKEY

BY FIRUZA HASANOVA, KIMEP SENIOR



Currently, I am a senior student of Marketing and Management at KIMEP University. In Spring 2015, I decided to take part in a study abroad program at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey, Ankara. METU is the most prestigious institution in Turkey and it is among the top universities in the world. This program was an opportunity for me to leave my comfort zone and experience a different environment and meet new people. I also wanted to compare different educational systems and teaching styles.

From the first day at METU I fell in love with the place and people. The International Office was very nice to the exchange students and we all had mentors who were very helpful with accommodation and documentation issues as well as our adjustment. My adaptation process initially began with travelling. The International Office offered trips to other cities of Turkey to exchange students.

Therefore, a lot of weekends were spent on activities such as hiking, travelling, sightseeing and visits to local museums. During these travels I had a chance to talk to local people and make new friends among exchange and local students. So, I can say with confidence that I had no difficulties with social life.

From the academic perspective, METU has taught me a lot. The first thing I noticed was the level of self-education among students. Most of the time students were familiar with upcoming material, so instructors did not spend much time on lectures. Instead the focus was on class discussions. As a result, this system allows instructors to cover more information which would make the exams more difficult. In other words, I had to work really hard. Nevertheless, this method taught me how to be more self-reliant and disciplined.

I enjoyed my first semester in Turkey a lot, so I decided to extend my exchange period for one more semester. This time I applied for a Mevlana Scholarship provided by the Turkish government and was lucky to win it. The scholarship provided me with a monthly living stipend. I enjoyed the second semester even more for a number of reasons. First, I became more familiar with the local culture and felt comfortable. Second, I learned to communicate in the local language, which gave me more freedom outside the campus. Third, I became more familiar with the places in town and could go to places on my own. Fourth, I started to engage in different group activities such as Yoga Club and Ankara Expat Group that organized hiking trips. I participated in different conferences such as METU Finance Congress and took advantage of events organized by METU Academia, where the managers of Big 4 companies and other international corporations gave speeches and workshops.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that the exchange year at METU opened new horizons for me and helped me grow as a person. I made friends from countries I was barely familiar with. The educational system taught me to manage my time properly and cope with large amount of information. Finally, through visiting diverse cities of Turkey I was able to enrich my travel experience.

FIRST STEPS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEN TWO PASSIONS COME TOGETHER

BY GULNAZA KHALMANBETOVA, AUCA JUNIOR

"I've had a dream to lead a business related to arts and crafts since I was ten years old."









My dream is to run a business in the art sphere. So during the summer, I organized a social project for disabled women in Osh. The participants had to take sewing lessons. I took advantage of this opportunity and joined the class myself and learned to sew. To practice my new skills, I decided to make decorative and customized pillow cases for the members of my family and my friends. Everyone liked my work and some of my friends even asked me to make more. One of my friends ad-

vised me to open a little workshop and I followed the suggestion.

I started a workshop, created an Instagram account, and using my marketing skills, was able to attract customers. Surprisingly, already during the first week, I started to receive enough orders to hire my first staff member to be responsible for collecting orders.

In a month, we earned enough income to rent a small office room for a workshop.

To cover the costs, I decided to expand the workshop and we started offering handmade decorations, invitations and various accessories for wedding events. Right now my little workshop is called "Datka Show" shop of creative and unique gifts. In the near future, I want to expand this shop. I've had a dream to lead a business related to arts and crafts since I was ten years old. Even if it is a small shop, this is my big accomplishment and I am very proud of it.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

TRANSFORMING AUCA CAMPUS: INTERVIEW WITH AIZHARKYN BURKANOVA

BY ADEL SULTANBEKOVA, AUCA SENIOR

After graduating from AUCA in June 2014, Aizharkyn Burkanova started her career at her alma mater as Special Assistant to the Chief Information Officer. Recently she was promoted to the position of Associate Vice President of Business Intelligence at AUCA. In this role, Aizharkyn plays a key role in the strategic development of new information systems to enhance student learning and improve business operations at AUCA.

1. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR NEW JOB POSITION? WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES?

I was extremely excited about my new job position; in this role, I can take my skills to the next level. In the Office of Chief Information Officer I handled project coordination and business development, and helped launch the Shared Service Center where students can access the registrar, admissions, finance, and IT-- a sort of one-stop shop. The hard work paid off when I was promoted to Associate VP of Business Intelligence. I now lead a team responsible for helping transform the University into a business that truly differentiates and competes.

2. ARE THERE ANY EXCITING NEWS OR ANY OTHER SUCCESSES AT AUCA THAT YOU CAN SHARE?

AUCA is changing rapidly to become a cutting-edge university, technologically advanced, and student-centric. We have a centralized database and many automated operations. We launched the "All-in-One" to access services, secure entry, library access,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ADEL SULTANBEKOVA

Adel is an AUCA senior majoring in Business Administration. In addition to her impressive academic achievements, Adel has demonstrated her strong motivation to contribute to the success of her community. In her sophomore year, she won a grant from the U.S. Department of State to conduct a fund-raising concert in Kyrgyzstan. Her efforts helped raise sufficient funds to donate a defibrillator and other cardiac devices to the National Heart Center in Bishkek. In her junior year, Adel received a grant sponsored by USAID and the Association of Social Entrepreneurs of Kyrgyzstan to organize a community project for unemployed women. Adel also took part in a wide range of professional development and leadership conferences, including

shared service center, canteens, payments, and more. "In Touch" is next: a program for local cafes and shops which will provide discounts to the members of AUCA community. And I am also working on bringing 4G LTE access to the whole AUCA community.

3. COULD YOU PLEASE TELL A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR PREVIOUS VENTURE? ARE YOU GOING TO CONTINUE WORKING ON IT OR OPENING A NEW ONE?

A small coffee spot, 'Zebra Coffee' in the library of AUCA. I opened it with a partner during senior year. It has been quite successful, and we opened a second spot in the main building of AUCA. There have been rises and falls, but we did not quit. In fact, we went on to establish a bakery in Bishkek. We ran those for a while, but we felt the time needed to run these was hurting our professional growth so we closed out. The bakery is now called Blue Box Canteen and it is operating well. We are glad that our idea is alive and Blue Box Canteen is now functioning and prospering.

4. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE NEAREST FUTURE? WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

It is hard to tell because you never know what happens next. But what I know for sure is that I want to grow personally and professionally to be able to bring value to my community and to the world. Surely I want to enter a master's program to upgrade my knowledge and get to the next level of expertise in business analytics and business intelligence.

5. LOOKING BACK AT YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT TIPS & ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT FELLOWS?

I could try to organize the tips accordingly by the year of study. First year: Study hard and work hard: for free. The first year is not a time to enjoy your state as a student of a prestigious university and relax, especially now since you are receiving a scholarship. Second year: Socialize and keep studying and working hard: still for free. If you entered clubs as a volunteer then you should have gained some friends by the time you are a second year student. If not, you still have time to get friends. Attend the workshops organized by U.S.-CAEF, attend other workshops, and try to learn more outside of your classes while socializing. It might be pleasant and very beneficial for you. Learn how to build your resume and how to write a cover letter, start collecting 'thank you' letters and certificates from your volunteering activities. Third year: Travel and explore. The university offers so many exchange programs, research opportunities, conferences and workshops abroad. Participate in them - those are for you. Attend the Junior's Ball, you deserve it! Fourth year: Take a breath and push yourself once more. This is the last year and you cannot ruin everything you were building from the first year of your studies. You still need to write your thesis, graduate, and continue chasing your dream. Just do not panic, and remember about your goals because anyone can teach you their right way (including me being such a smarty now), but you have your own way, and that is your story.

the Social Entrepreneurship Conference in Istanbul, Turkey in March, 2014 and World Business Dialogue in Cologne, Germany in March, 2015. Adel's work experience includes internships at UNDP, Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyzstan, and AUCA's Business Clinic. Currently, Adel is the leader of a startup, Free Bishkek Tour, which provides affordable guided tours in Kyrgyzstan. In recognition of her remarkable achievements, the Foundation selected Adel to participate in the fall 2016 U.S. Capstone Internship program in Washington, DC.



STRENGTHS QUEST

BY YELENA VOROBEY, PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.-CAEF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Alumni officers continue to actively promote the professional and personal development of program participants through workshops specifically tailored to the needs of program alumni and fellows.

On November 21, 2015, Karina Kussainova, Vice President for Professional Development, together with her colleagues from Inspire Consulting, held a workshop called StrengthsQuest for juniors, seniors, and alumni in Bishkek. This program is designed for people who want to learn about talents and skills that they possess and which may prove critical to their success. Prior to the training, all participants had taken a special

test that helped the trainers draw a statistical chart of participants' special strengths and talents. During the workshop, coaches divided participants into small discussion groups and helped students better understand their strengths and ways to effectively apply them in their academic, professional, and social life.

All fellows were extremely impressed with the training. According to their feedback, this was one of the most successful, much needed and inspiring workshops arranged by the alumni council. The strength approach offered by the trainers was truly innovative and transformative for our fellows who grew up in the traditional Central Asian society where people are expected to focus and work on eliminating their weaknesses. We would like to offer just a few quotes below that demonstrate the great impact the training had on our fellows:









ADEL SULTANBEKOVA

"The workshop and the test were truly unique. I have never heard about this test and I was very happy that U.S.-CAEF gave us a chance to find out more about ourselves. Because of the test, I realized that particular features of my character could be used as my strengths. So this gives me an incentive to develop them further and not to concentrate on my weaknesses only. This is a new approach, but I hope I will be able to learn to think in this new and beneficial way. It was also useful to realize that this approach will help me improve my communication skills and relationships with other people by concentrating on other people's strengths."

AIZADA TYNCHYBEK KYZY

"The workshop was exactly what I needed and what I have been searching for. Now I know about my strengths and what I should capitalize on to be successful. I'm really grateful for such a motivating and empowering workshop. It motivated me to realize the plans that I have been postponing for a while."

ZHAMILIA KLYCHEVA

"The "Strengthfinders" workshop influenced my thinking. Before attending this event I would not even think about the great potential I have to achieve my goals and develop further in life."

KUTTUBEK RAKHMANBERDIEV

"I found out that I have such strengths as communication, activator, ideation, etc. These qualities are very important in the marketing sphere that interests me. Now I feel more confident that I can achieve a lot pursuing a career in marketing."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



I am an AUCA graduate of 2014 from the Economics Department. Being part of different exchange programs, I have spent more than three years working and studying in the United States, Norway and Kazakhstan. At the moment, I am attaining an Erasmus Mundus Master's degree in a multi-university setting in four countries across the world. In addition, I have been actively involved in various charitable and volunteering activities. Currently, I serve as the President of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association. This experience allows me to develop my leadership potential. I am highly motivated to make U.S.-CAEF a lifelong engagement for alumni and fellows.

ALUMNI CLOSE UP

MALIKA IBRAGIMOVA

AUCA, CLASS OF 2015

I participated in the "Life in Kyrgyzstan" conference this year, which took place in Bishkek on October 1-2, 2015 for the first time. The two-day conference brought together national and international experts to exchange knowledge and experiences on recent socio-economic developments in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, and to promote evidence-based policymaking. The organizers of the conference were Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), International Security and Development Center (ISDC), Institute of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Central Asia, and the World Bank.

Scholars were invited to contribute to the discussion during the conference and to submit their individual research papers studying various aspects of socio-economic development in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Besides that, on September 30, there was a student workshop for AUCA students whose papers were submitted and the best student research paper was announced during the conference. I presented my paper Socio-Economic Determinants of Life Satisfaction in Kyrgyzstan and won a prize for the best student research. It is a great honor for me to receive this award at the beginning of my academic career.

Currently, I work as an economic expert at the OJSC "Kyrgyzaltyn," which specializes in the development of gold deposits. I participate in negotiations between the Kyrgyz Government and international investors related to the country's biggest gold deposit "Kumtor." Recently, I was asked to become part of the team that works on the development of the strategic plan for Kyrgyzaltyn, the main focus of which is the restructuring of a big government-owned mining company into a new holding-like institution. I am also glad to men-tion that I work together with another U.S.-CAEF alumna, Asylgul Kenzhebaeva, who is a finance specialist in the same department. We have been working together on "Development Strategy of OJSC "Kyrgyzaltyn". It is an important experience, and I am grateful to the management of the company for their trust.



TEMUR UTEGENOV

KIMEP, CLASS OF 2012

After working for three years in the finance department of the Atyrau office of Tengizshevroil (TCO), I decided to transfer to another department to learn new skills. Now I work with the TCO's contracts group. This is a 28 day rotation job. I have already done 2 rotations in Aktau city; my current rotation is in Prorva Port camp near the Tengiz oilfield. The camp reminds me of the life in a spaceship. It is located in the remote steppe 20 km away from the Caspian Sea. The rooms, cafeteria, gym and offices are linked by corridors so you can stay in the facility without going outdoors. Especially, this construction is convenient when it is cold and windy.

I found working in the SCM department more interesting than in the finance department because I am involved in a number of activities -- I work more with suppliers and take part in negotiations on the scope of work, costs, deadlines, etc. I deal with construction issues which involves visits to construction sites; and I am also involved in the administration of contracts, amendments, and contract-award processes. Overall, this is a very valuable and interesting experience for me. The only disadvantage is that I don't see my family for four weeks in a row. Therefore, I may move back to Almaty in the near future.



MEET NEW ALUMNI OFFICERS

BY YELENA VOROBEY, PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.-CAEF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Several rearrangements have been made in the leadership team of the Alumni Association. The Association is deeply thankful to Aidana Abdrakhmanova and Ignat Kim for their service and wishes them all the best in their future endeavors. Jemal Agayeva assumed the position of VP for Professional Development, and two new officers joined the Association recently - Darina Yakovleva and Valentina Khomenko. We are expecting another eventful and productive year together.



I graduated from the Business Administration department of AUCA in June 2015. Three months later, I went to Washington DC as a finalist of the Capstone Internship Program, where I got a chance to work on my postgraduate professional development while interning at GIC Group as a research associate. Upon my return to Bishkek, I received a position of Business and Marketing Manager at GTS, which operates in IT, business consulting, logistics and supply chain management industries. Thus, I have already started working on my goal to contribute to the development of the region.

It is a huge honor for me to join the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association as a treasurer. I will do my best to make a significant contribution to our community, and make sure the finances are being spent in a smart way. I can't wait to start working with our wonderful Alumni Association team.



DARINA YAKOVLEVA KIMEP, CLASS OF 2015 VICE PRESIDENT FOR REGIONAL NETWORKS VENUE STAFF, BRITISH COUNCIL, ALMATY

I am a 2015 U.S.-CAEF alumna and a recent graduate of KIMEP University, majoring in marketing and minoring in management. My U.S.-CAEF scholarship gave me even more motivation and I received an Erasmus Mundus scholarship to study at the University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain in AY 2014-15. Currently, I am searching for a job while working as a venue staff at the British Council in Almaty. I found it difficult to find a job after graduation and understand how important it is to know the right people in the professional field. They can share their knowledge and experience, give you some good tips on how to find a job, or advise you on available vacancies they are aware of. This is one of the reasons why I volunteered to become a VP of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association, as I realize that these events can play a vital role in one's career. Being a VP for regional networks, I would like to organize events and get as many alumni involved in them as possible. Keeping in touch, we can help and motivate each other and make U.S.-CAEF proud of us and our successes even more.

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