

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.



LEADING & LEARNING

Celebrating AUCA TV with Bakhrom Tursunov
P. 2

Chynara Erkulova: paving career paths through KIMEP Case Club
P. 3

Meet our freshmen leaders: Bekzhan Akbayev and Mustafa Ziyatbekov
P. 4

GRADUATION 2016:

Reflections of graduating seniors
P. 4

GROWING THROUGH CHALLENGES & EXPERIENCE

Makhabat Tashbaltaeva and Timur Karimov about their internship experiences
P. 7

PRO-KG opens new opportunities for Kuttubek Rakhmanberdiev
P.7

ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH COMPETITIONS

U.S.-CAEF Fellows- Anisa Atalova, Tynystan Talantov, Aleksandr Kinyakin and Tahmina Zakirova fare well in economic and business competitions
P. 8

FIRST STEPS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Azim Tilekov opens his greenhouse
P. 9

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Meerim Moldalievva promotes youth rights
P. 9

Zhamiliya Klycheva promotes education in her native town
P. 10

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Alumni closeup: interview with Nazokat Omuralieva
P. 10

Meet new alumni officers: Jennet Gurbanmammedova and Amina Iqbolzoda
P. 11

INTERVIEW WITH BAKHROM TURSUNOV

PAGE 2

LEADING & LEARNING

CELEBRATING AUCA TV WITH BAKHROM TURSUNOV

BY ANISA ATALOVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2012

AUCA junior Bakhrom Tursunov is one of the most outstanding U.S.-CAEF fellows majoring in Business Administration. Currently, Bakhrom is a PR director at AUCA TV. In 2015, AUCA TV, which celebrated its first anniversary on February 13, was already recognized as the Best Youth Project of the Year in Kyrgyzstan. It is a big achievement for Bakhrom's team. Senior Anisa Atalova decided to congratulate Bakhrom with this huge success and find out more about his work and success.

Q: Bakhrom, could you tell us about your background?

I am from a small southern town of Kyzyl-Kiya located in remote region of Kyrgyzstan - Batken. When I was in my senior year of high school, AUCA representatives visited my town and told us about the New Generation Academy (NGA), an intensive academic scholarship program at AUCA that prepares students for university education. At that time I had only two choices: either to go to Russia to work or study at a local college-- neither of the options appealed to me. I decided to use this opportunity and I applied for NGA and was accepted. While at AUCA, I learned about the U.S.-CAEF scholarship. I think NGA was an important step in my life because without the knowledge it gave me, I wouldn't have stood a chance of getting a U.S.-CAEF scholarship.

Q: Why do you think you were selected as a U.S.-CAEF fellow?

One of the main reasons probably was my involvement in extra-curricular life both at school and during the NGA year. I loved making videos starting from my school years and continued doing that at AUCA, making promotional and student-life videos for the university and being responsible for AUCA's social media pages from the first months.

Q: Bakhrom, what is the achievement in your life that you are especially proud of?

I have a lot of achievements; however, I think I haven't achieved something really big yet. Surely, NGA, U.S.-CAEF and studies at AUCA are the biggest achievements in my life that I am most proud of. As you know, I am a PR director of AUCA TV. This year we celebrated our first anniversary. AUCA TV was created on February 13, 2015. Andrew Wachtel, President

of AUCA, personally thanked me and our team for making our university more visible not only in Kyrgyzstan but also in the world. In 2015, AUCA TV was recognized as the Best Youth Project of the Year in Kyrgyzstan. It is a big achievement for my team and me.

Q: What are your biggest dreams/plans? What legacy do you want to leave?

Probably, my biggest plans are mainly dictated by my passion for video-making. I love watching good movies and dream of making them in the future. I want to make thought-provoking movies that would change people's perceptions.

Q: Do you see yourself as a director or producer of films?

Surely, I love directing and all the work behind the camera.

Q: Do you think your studies in the Business Administration Department will help you in your future endeavors?

Of course! At AUCA TV, I am already using most of the knowledge from my business courses. Management, marketing and other courses are really helping me to make AUCA TV the best student television in the history of AUCA.

In addition, I am taking Documentary Film-making where I am learning about the financial aspects of the industry...Our professor told us that mass market movies are created to make money that is used for high-end movies, which are not always accepted by the masses. It is very important to understand the business side of the cinematography to make good movies, and I am certain that my business degree will help me a lot in this respect.

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.



Q: So, what will be your first steps in achieving your dreams?

I think it all starts from small steps. First, I should have a good experience with professionals in this field; that is why now I am looking for a good internship. Secondly, it is very important to have a good team of like-minded people. I think I found such people in my AUCA TV team. Furthermore, it is important just to start trying out things.

Q: Talking about the AUCA TV, it is very successful now and you are involved in so many projects. Tell us about them and how you find time for everything.

Surely, AUCA TV is the main project I am involved in. We have so many new creative ideas. For instance, now we are thinking about making a new music program, as we have so many talented students at AUCA. Another idea is to make a student TV show here at AUCA. About time, yes, I do have many projects. My problem is that I cannot say "No", I am like a man in the movie "Yes Man". So sometimes it gets difficult to choose between finishing

my work, going out with my friends or to a date (laughs). But I know that someday my hard work will pay off.

Q: Do you have role models? Who are they?

Surprisingly, I don't have one specific person as a role model. I love analyzing great people's bios and try to take something from each of them. I am really grateful for the public organization Pro Kg in that sense. Through this organization I meet many talented young people.

Q: Bakhrom, how do you cope with difficulties?

I think everybody has hard times at some point. It happens to me, when I work really hard and it seems like nothing good is happening, and you hear only criticism. I found out that there are also many people who actually support you, but they might not always say it to you out loud. Talking to interesting people who motivate me, and learning new knowledge through various trainings always help me.



BAKHROM WITH AUCA PRESIDENT A. WACHTEL

Q: Bakhrom, thank you so much for such a fascinating story! Can you please give some short advice to our U.S.-CAEF fellows?

Although I myself don't talk much, I came to realize that it is important to talk to people and expand your social and professional networks, which will serve you well after graduation.

PAVING CAREER PATHS THROUGH KIMEP CASE CLUB

BY CHYNARA ERKULOVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2012

In the fall semester, I became **President of KIMEP Case Club**, a young, but promising student organization that comprises the top 10% of the KIMEP business students, all striving to join top management consulting firms.



CHYNARA ERKULOVA

Many business students at KIMEP are determined to find jobs at Big4 companies upon their graduation. However, I think there are many other amazing job opportunities out there, management consulting being one of them. For many students here, joining McKinsey upon graduation seems impossible. The goal of our club is to show that with preparation and perseverance, nothing is impossible.

Since all previous members of the club had already graduated, I had to build the organization from scratch. My main role was to put together a team of bright and ambitious business students who could learn from each other. I personally sent 10 invitations to the students who fit the profile, including several U.S.-CAEF Fellows--**Zarrina Mulloboeva, Zulfiya Urunova, Aigerim Rysbaeva** and **Jahongir Rahimov**.

Our primary activity at KIMEP Case Club is to practice case interviews that are part of a job application process to top management consulting firms such as McKinsey, BCG and Bain. On average, there are five case interviews for round two and three at these firms, and the more cases you do, the higher are your chances of passing all rounds. Our target is 60-80 cases. We meet 3-5 times a week. Seniors meet more often as they will be applying for jobs soon.

In the spring semester we accepted new members who had to pass our screening and interviewing process. It was a rigorous selection, and only a few students managed to get into our club. We now have a team of 30 members of committed young professionals.

To ensure continuity and sustainability of the club, we appointed a President-elect who proved herself to be a perfect fit for the role and has recently been appointed as the new President of the club. Now I feel that my mission for the club is accomplished.

GRADUATION 2016:

REFLECTIONS OF GRADUATING SENIORS



AUCA GRADUATING SENIORS

The sixth class of U.S.-CAEF fellows will be graduating this spring at AUCA and KIMEP.

Our graduating seniors asked us to share their thank you notes for U.S.-CAEF and tips for younger fellows. We would like to thank all who contributed to this section of the newsletter: Medina Abdylkasyмова, Ayna Annaorazova, Anisa Atalova, Aizhamal Bakytbekova, Shahnoza Davlatzoda, Yuliya Davydenko, Chynara Erkulova, Firuza Hasanova, Gozel Ilmuradova, Altynai Kozubekova, Umedjon Kurbonali, Batima Myrzabekova, Asel Raiymbekova, Aiperi Sharipova, Aiperi Sharipova, Adel Sultanbekova, Makhabat Tashbaltaeva, Tynystan Talantov, Ilhan Yollyyev and Nazerke Zarlyhanova. Unfortunately, due to space limitations, we were not able to include all quotes. However, we believe that the quotes below encompass all fellows' thoughts.

THANK YOU NOTES

"Everything I have achieved, during these four years would not have been possible without U.S.-CAEF."

- MEDINA ABDYLKASYMOVA

"U.S.-CAEF has been one of the greatest blessings for me that granted incredible opportunities for better future! Precious education, caring coordinators and mentors, a family of talented and motivated fellows –this is what U.S.-CAEF means to me."

- ADEL SULTANBEKOVA

"U.S.-CAEF has given me hope for the future I have never dreamed of. Now, I have a big responsibility--to be a leader and a world-changer."

-ANISA ATALOVA

"U.S.-CAEF, thank you for giving me wings to fly!"

- ALTYNAI KOZUBEKOVA



Graduating class of 2016 has collected valuable suggestions that they would like to share with the younger members of the U.S.-CAEF family. Feel free to print out the next two pages as poster keepsakes.

KIMEP FRESHMEN CLUB LEADERS



BEKZHAN AKBAYEV
KAZAKHSTAN 2015

"In the fall semester, I joined KIMEP PIE which is known to be the first student magazine on the territory of CIS. In addition, KIMEP PIE is also an event agency. One of the main events of the club is KIMEP Awards, an annual charitable event when we present special awards to the most active students, clubs, organizations and even professors. This year we raised over 170,000 tenge (\$509) for Kovcheg, a local orphanage. Recently I was appointed as **the editor-in-chief of KIMEP PIE magazine**. I will assume my new responsibilities in the fall semester."



MUSTAFA ZIYATBEKOV
KAZAKHSTAN 2015

"I was selected to become a member of the KIMEP Friends organization. KIMEP Friends organizes a variety of large-scale university events and parties. The first event I was involved in was convocation, which took place on campus. I found an affordable venue to hold an after party for this event. In addition, when we celebrated the club's anniversary, I was able to negotiate good deals with vendors and save money. After this success I was asked to become the **head of sponsorship** of the organization. Now I am responsible for the budget and relationships with sponsors."

ACADEMICS & PERSONAL GROWTH

Don't miss your classes. Where else would you get this valuable knowledge?



UMEDJON KURBONALI

Use every possibility, maximize your success through studies, the U.S.-CAEF Regional and Capstone Internship programs, trainings, meetings with alumni, AUCA exchange programs, conferences, workshops, volunteering - all these are related to your future success.

Take some elective courses outside of your major/minor that are really interesting for you.

Try to participate in class discussions and take notes. Those two things help boost memory during the exams.



AYNA ANNAORAZOVA

WORK ON YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT. Stop procrastinating!

PRIORITIZE!

THINK OF SOMETHING TO DO IN ADDITION TO STUDYING. FIND A HOBBY.

You should not let any failure kill your motivation.

Don't give in to peer pressure and try to be someone you're not.

Think of something to do in addition to studying. Find a hobby.

Don't postpone difficult subjects until the last semester. You will be very busy during your senior year.

DON'T CHEAT!
RELY ONLY ON YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

Don't take difficult courses during the first and last years of study. Combine difficult courses with easier ones.

Explore opportunities at AUCA such as WARC (taking lessons and becoming a tutor), SILC (grant opportunity and assistant position), student clubs (Enactus, Debate etc.), participate in the exchange programs, international conferences, embark on internship/job experiences as soon as possible and be open to take lessons from every challenge in university life to become a better version of yourself.

FIRST, COMPLETE PRINCIPLES OF FINANCE, THEN TAKE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & MARKETS.



ILHAN YOLLYYEV

CAREER & NETWORKING

I advise students to work more on Case Competitions, because it helps you apply theoretical knowledge and develop your analytical thinking skills.

Keep your options open. At some point you will start constraining yourself and will prefer to miss out on some events and activities. My advice is – don't. Of course you do need to prioritize, but if you are limiting yourself to one circle of people, the chances that most of the people around you will be very similar to you are high, which isn't good at all. If you get to choose between watching a movie or getting to meet new people at some conference, choose the second option, because you never know how the people you meet can later transform your life.

Networking is the most important skill for building relationships with different people who can be influential in your future.



ADEL SULTANBEKOVA

I advise students to work more on Case Competitions, because it helps you apply theoretical knowledge and develop your analytical thinking skills.

Start thinking about your CV early on. You have four years to make it competitive. Keep your GPA high, find a part-time job or internship, and apply for exchange programs. During the second year, do not miss an opportunity to apply for the U.S.-CAEF regional Internship program. It is a very good opportunity to get work experience.

GET ALONG WITH OTHER FELLOWS.
IT'S SUCH A JOY TO BE PART OF THE U.S.-CAEF FAMILY!

Try yourself in the areas that are of potential interest to you. There isn't a better time to try all of it than now. It is by trying yourself that you understand what you definitely don't want to do. If Big4 is of interest to you, try it before you graduate, because, who knows, maybe you actually won't like it there at all.

Build a network at home. If you are planning to go back to your country sooner or later, you would need to know the right people there who can help you get started upon your return. Since most of you live away from home, don't expect things to stay the same when you come back. It will be extremely difficult for you if you lose touch with people at home (outside your family of course), so be sure to maintain and develop the respective professional network back home as well.

Join student organizations. I myself underestimated how important student organizations are; however, that's where you get to make friends outside your cozy dorm circle of friends. You also learn many things simply by organizing events together and interacting with people who are very different from you. Your university network and developed soft skills will come in handy when you graduate.

GROWING THROUGH CHALLENGES & EXPERIENCE

INTERNSHIP LEADING TO EMPLOYMENT

BY MAKHABAT TASHBALTAEVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2012



MAKHABAT TASHBALTAEVA

After passing all interview stages, I was offered a paid internship for one month at KPMG. The internship started with two days of training. I was assigned a mentor who made my transition into KPMG seamless. Since the project I was involved in was big and time was limited, my team relied on my contribution, and treated me as their co-worker, giving me important tasks. I felt great being part of this professional team. The internship was substantive and I learned so much about auditing and the work environment at KPMG. While my university knowledge helped me a lot, the experience made me also realize that there is still a lot to learn. It was hard to believe that so much was achieved in just one month. On the last day of my internship I was offered a permanent position of Assistant 1 at KPMG Bishkek.

HOW TO GET AN AWESOME INTERNSHIP WITH MCCANN ERICKSON

BY TIMUR KARIMOV, TAJIKISTAN 2013

Before meeting speakers from McCann Erickson, a world-known advertising agency, with offices in about 130 countries, I didn't expect anything special. However, once the presentation started, I realized that this company is a perfect fit for my internship.

I applied for an intern position with the company and was invited to an interview. I thought that their hiring process would be fast and easy. However, they sent me some homework I needed to complete before the interview. The first task was to write about myself and my expectations about the internship. The second task was really challenging. I received three pictures with a bottle of water, chocolate bars, and veggie brella and was asked to create a story around one of the three and come up with the brand name, slogan, explain why the product is special; and develop marketing strategies and advertising tools for the product. I had to create everything from scratch using only credible data. I understood that the

company takes seriously everybody, even interns. Their attitude gave me so much energy, motivation and stimulus that I decided to dedicate all of my time to this task and my efforts paid back. I remember the moment when I finished my presentation and General Account Manager said "This presentation deserves applause." These words were like music to my ears!

I received an internship offer and was allowed to work in two departments- creative and accounting departments which helped me get up to speed with the latest company projects related to P&G, Coca-Cola, Nestle Company and Lexus. Now I know for sure, when you find the work you are obsessed with, your job is nothing else but fun!



TIMUR KARIMOV

PRO-KG OPENS NEW OPPORTUNITIES

BY KUTTUBEK RAKHMANBERDIEV, KYRGYZSTAN 2013



KUTTUBEK RAKHMANBERDIEV

I was selected from among 80 candidates and hired as **assistant to the program coordinator at ProKG**. ProKG is a non-profit organization established in 2009 by young professionals who graduated from leading foreign universities such as Harvard, Stanford, Duke and INSEAD. Currently, most of them are working at top companies like McKinsey, KPMG, Deloitte, Google and so on. The mission of ProKG is to create a platform that brings together young professionals who aspire to be leaders. Activities

of the organization are focused on the development of educational and professional capacities as well as the personal development of young people.

Working at ProKG is a great opportunity for my growth. It gives me a fantastic chance to improve my networking skills through meeting with members of ProKG. Indeed, through this organization it will be easier for me to find a business consulting company for my summer internship.

ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH COMPETITIONS

GROWTH DRIVER

BY ANISA ATALOVA AND TYNYSTAN TALANTOV, KYRGYZSTAN 2012



TYNYSTAN & ANISA

In February, Moscow State University held its fourth contest on corporate finance known as Growth Driver. Growth Driver is a unique educational project that allows undergraduate business students to demonstrate their knowledge of corporate finance and their ability to solve real cases. Two AUCA seniors,

Anisa Atalova and **Tynystan Talantov**, having won the national Growth Driver competition, traveled to Moscow to represent Kyrgyzstan at the final event.

This was the first time Kyrgyz students had a chance to take part in the championship. The first round of the competition was held online. Students were given real-life investment projects for financial evaluation and analysis. Three teams from AUCA, including two U.S.-CAEF fellows Tynystan Talantov and Anisa Atalova, were advanced to the finals and traveled to Moscow to present their final investment projects on February 27th- March 1st. Even though the AUCA teams did not get the top places at the championship, the participation in this

high-level championship was already a success. Participants had an opportunity to enhance their practical skills through working on real-life cases and presenting their projects in front of top managers of investment banks and major international consulting companies of Russia. Moreover, the event was an excellent networking opportunity—students had a chance to participate in discussions with the executives of investment and audit companies, and their peers from all over Russia.

Although Anisa and Tynystan did not receive awards in Moscow, they felt proud to be the first U.S.-CAEF fellows from AUCA to take part in this prestigious international competition.

MONARCHIAL CAPITAL

BY ALEKSANDR KINYAKIN, TURKMENISTAN 2015



On February 4-7, 2016 KIMEP University along with the Center of Applied Economics Dana Zhol organized an intellectual game,

“Monarchical Capital – Moncap 2.0”. About 50 students participated in the event.

“Moncap 2.0” is a fascinating game that makes a player think strategically. This economics game represents a simplified financial model of today’s world. Through the game you can see how such world economic giants as the USA, Russia and China influence young oil-dependent countries like Kazakhstan; how inflation, devaluation and revaluation of national currency, adoption of various economic laws and many other financial tools and mechanisms influence the development of the national industry.

As a freshman I had not taken financial or economic classes by then; therefore I had to read and practice a lot to understand unfamiliar economic concepts and phenomena. Another challenge was to demonstrate good debate skills during the competition. Fortunately, I started attending preparation trainings from the very beginning, and thanks to my persistence, I learned needed skills and knowledge for succeeding in the game. My efforts paid back—I placed **first and received a monetary prize of 100,000 KZT** (about \$300).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ESSAY COMPETITION

BY TAKHMINA ZAKIROVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2014

In October, I took part in an essay contest organized by the Economics Department of AUCA. The contest was devoted to the issues of poverty, environment and gender equality in the Kyrgyz Republic. I chose gender equality and sustainable resource use for my topic. This was my first mini research. I had thought that doing research was boring; however, I came to realize that when the topic is interesting and concerns you, it can go very smoothly. I found out many interesting facts about the UN activities related to gender problems and became inspired to learn more. My essay became one of the five best papers, which allowed me to advance to the next level. I took part in a regional conference on November 12-13, 2015 and won a monetary prize.



TAKHMINA ZAKIROVA

FIRST STEPS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

GREENHOUSE BUSINESS

BY AZIM TILEKOV, KYRGYZSTAN 2013

I have always been dreaming about running and managing my own business. Since my freshman year I had some business ideas and was continually working to find ways to realize them, but every time when I had a great idea I stumbled on financial/investment problems and decided to postpone it for the next time.

Last winter my friend invited me to attend a two-month training program called "Business & Life Skills", organized by Instream Youth Foundation. I found this training was very productive. Our business trainers taught us to develop business plans and to pitch our startup ideas in front of potential investors. This training encouraged my friend and me to create a greenhouse.

Based on our marketing research, we found out that during the winter and spring seasons only 20% of tomatoes and cucumbers come from the local greenhouses, while 80% constitute imported produce with high levels of pesticides from China.

We chose to go organic. Many entrepreneurs criticized us saying that our care for people's health would lead us to bankruptcy because organic farming is not profitable and sustainable. But still, we continued to pursue our mission.

It took five months for us to build our greenhouse. We launched it in October. During the past seven months, I learned a lot of valuable things. First, I understood how important it is to have good partners. I wouldn't have been able to realize this project alone by myself. Second, you need to be committed if you want your startup to succeed. In a startup, there are no weekends and your working day does not end at 6 pm. It can last even until midnight. I learned to use my time efficiently and was able to combine my studies with the work at my startup, although it was quite challenging.



AZIM TILEKOV



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

PROMOTING YOUTH RIGHTS

BY MEERIM MOLDAIEVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2015

Since I became a freshman at AUCA, I was involved in a number of projects. One of them is a social project -- "Jump above the sky high" (JASH), sponsored by a youth-run organization, AIESEC. The aim of the project is to make local students aware about universal human rights as well as to improve their English skills through providing interactive sessions.

Preparation in the project started in the middle of November 2015. I became a team leader for five students. To make the project more exciting we brought two exchange participants from the Netherlands and Indonesia. We reached out to two universities, Arbaev Kyrgyz State University and Balasagyn Kyrgyz National University, as well as the High Time English center. Working with the universities turned out to be quite challenging due to bureaucratic procedures and language problems. My team members

were foreign students from Afghanistan and Pakistan and couldn't speak the local languages. Nevertheless, we were able to overcome all problems.

The project took place from January 15 to February 28. Our volunteers conducted sessions on human rights at the universities and the English center for six weeks. Although the project lasted for a short period, it made a positive impact on local students. They became aware of their international rights and were motivated to study English.

Personally, I gained a lot of valuable experience-- I learned to manage my time effectively and to lead a diverse team; I also improved my communication skills. I strongly believe that effective communication is a powerful tool to do any business. This experience made me more confident and self-aware.



MEERIM MOLDAIEVA

GET ENGAGED CONFERENCE

BY ZHAMILIA KLYCHEVA, KYRGYZSTAN 2013

On March 20-26, I participated in the Get Engaged Conference organized by the Bard Center for Civic Engagement, which was held in Budapest, Hungary. The conference gathered 40 students from 6 different colleges, including AUCA. The main goal of the conference was to gather socially active youth and engage students in community building through social projects. Thus, all 40 participants had a chance to present their projects.

The project that I presented, called IG-ROWE, targets middle and high school

children and teaches them the importance of self-education. I launched this project in my hometown, Balykchy, in April 2015. I have been working on it to make it sustainable.

Overall, the conference was extremely informative and useful. I met unique people from Palestine, the US, Russia, Germany and Lithuania. They inspired me for new changes. I am extremely happy to be an alumna of this conference.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

ALUMNI CLOSEUP: INTERVIEW WITH NAZOKAT OMURALIEVA

BY YELENA VOROBEY, CLASS OF 2014, PRESIDENT OF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Q: PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE AFTER GRADUATION.

After graduation I got married and moved to Budapest, Hungary with my husband. The first thing here was to find a job and get experience in my field. At AUCA, I chose accountancy as my profession, as this field was always fascinating for me. But in Europe, the job market is very competitive. For example, when I went to the job interview, there were eight candidates for one position, and they had many years of experience at top companies and master's degrees. However, I was able to pass the assessment exam and to do well at the interview because of the quality education I received from my AUCA professors, workshops and summer regional internship organized by the U.S.-CAEF program as well as community service activities during my student life. Currently, I am working at GE (General Electric) Global Operations Finance Center, in the Cash and Banking team as an accountant. My responsibilities include taking care of GE's bank transactions at four banks in Germany, Belgium, France and the UK. I love the company where I work for its flexible working hours policy: employees can work even from home and can leave whenever they finish their work. Here employees are considered to be the most valuable asset and are provided with volunteering opportunities, can learn a foreign language, receive technical and leadership trainings, attend a gym, use massage and food services, and

social gatherings which makes this company a great place to work.

Q: I HEARD THAT YOU WON A SCHOLARSHIP. CONGRATULATIONS! COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP AND ITS CRITERIA?

This year I won a NASDAQ scholarship to study MSc in Finance at CEU Business School (Central European University). It is a very competitive scholarship given to high-achieving students from emerging economies and who possess leadership potential and have high GMAT scores. The main goal of this scholarship is to prepare financial leaders who are likely to enhance the field of financial services in their home countries. I would highly advise our fellows to apply for CEU Business School as the school is the top business school in Central Europe and equips young professionals with practical knowledge.

Q: PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY AT WORK.

At work, I find time to participate in the company's volunteering group activities. Together with the GE volunteering group, we raised money for children from disadvantaged families, cleaned parks, organized concerts for elderly people and career planning workshops for high school students. I think volunteering should not stop after graduation from the university. There is always a chance to do community service projects with colleagues and friends;



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.

it improves not only your company's image but also helps the local community.

Q: COULD YOU GIVE ADVICE TO FELLOWS ON HOW TO BALANCE PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE?

Many people are surprised to see that I am working, studying, volunteering, learning a foreign language, and working towards my ACCA certificate. Besides, I find time to travel and to participate in social events and workshops. I can do it all because of my supportive husband and the flexible working hours policy of the company where I work. Of course, there are difficulties such as I find little time to do house chores and get tired after long days of work and studies. Luckily, my husband is a great cook, even much better than me. He

makes my life much easier. I think if I lived alone I wouldn't have been able to do so many things at the same time but efficient time management, prioritizing your commitments, supportive people around you, and flexible working hours really help you balance work and life.

Q: CAN YOU SHARE ANY TIPS WITH CURRENT FELLOWS OR NEW ALUMNI?

The most important lesson that I have learnt from Europeans and that I would like to share with my U.S.-CAEF fellows is to start working even while being a student. Any kind of experience, work, internship, volunteering, exchange semester, is valuable for employers. My European peers have 5-6 years of experience before they started to work. When they graduated they

already had a job offer from good companies. In Kyrgyzstan, students usually search for a job after graduation and they panic or agree with any job offer. Don't become one of these students.

Also, my colleagues impress me by their efficient time management: they work, study, have families and children, go to the gym, travel, and even party every week. Looking at them, I feel like we are not really using our time efficiently. The period from 20 to 30 years of a person is the most important time and affects the rest of his/her life. We should invest in our education, work experience and relationships. And career and marriage can go together; even they impact each other positively. In conclusion, get as much as possible from every moment of your life and invest in yourself!

MEET NEW ALUMNI OFFICERS



JENNET GURBANMAMEDOVA
KIMEP, CLASS OF 2015

VICE- PRESIDENT FOR REGIONAL NETWORK IN TURKMENISTAN
ASSISTANT PROJECT OFFICER,
HYUNDAI ENGINEERING CO. LTD,
TURKMENBASHY, TURKMENISTAN



AMINA IQBOLZODA
KIMEP UNIVERSITY, CLASS OF 2015.

VICE- PRESIDENT FOR REGIONAL NETWORK IN TAJIKISTAN
FINANCIAL ANALYST, EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT (EBRD),
DUSHANBE TAJIKISTAN.

In May 2015, I graduated from KIMEP University, where I received a degree in Business Administration with a focus on finance and accounting. In the fall of 2015, I took part in the U.S.-CAEF Capstone Internship Program in Washington, DC where I interned with Thoron Capital as a Junior Investment Analyst. Currently, I am an assistant to the Project Officer at Hyundai Engineering Co. LTD.

I am honored to join the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association. As Vice- President for Regional Network my goal is to create a fully functioning alumni network at the local level and to maintain strong relationships not only between alumni, but also between alumni and current fellows. From my own experience, I learned that alumni are great role models for current students, and recent graduates are often well placed to offer practical support to them as they start their careers. I am sure with hard work and support from the Board we will achieve all our goals.

I graduated from KIMEP University in May, 2015 with a major in Finance and a minor in Accounting. During my senior year, I became a Capstone Internship Program finalist and had a wonderful opportunity to work on my postgraduate professional development at The Washington Center and intern at IZAR Capital Group as a financial analyst. Upon my return to Tajikistan, I was employed by EBRD.

First, I was quite pessimistic about finding a job in Tajikistan and I know I am not alone in this regard because most of the graduates leave the country. However, while looking for a job, I realized that there are lots of opportunities to explore in Tajikistan. Therefore, I decided to take on the VP for Regional Network position in Tajikistan. I am planning to conduct professional development events for U.S.-CAEF alumni and current students in order to persuade them to stay here and work for their country. In addition, I am going to organize fun team building activities for our alumni.



WASHINGTON D.C.
1828 L Street NW, Suite 1200
Washington D.C. , USA 20036
Phone: (202) 833-7522
Fax: (202) 833-7523
us-caef@americancouncilsnetwork.org

ALMATY
20A, Kazibek Bi Str.,
4th floor
Almaty, Kazakhstan 050010
Phone: +7 727 291 9226
Fax: +7 727 259 8805
accels@americancouncils-kz.com

BISHKEK
187, Sydykov str., office #29.
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
720001
Phone: +996 312 91 09 89
Fax: +996 312 91 09 87
accels@elcat.kg

DUSHANBE
86 Tolstoy Street
Dushanbe, Tajikistan 734003
Phone: +992 37 221 1795
Fax: +992 37 221 1795
mamajanova@americancouncils-tj.org