

## UCA Recognised at National Museum Festival



Elmira Kochumkulova (left), receiving the Certificate of Appreciation from Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Culture, Altynbek Maksutov

The University of Central Asia (UCA), in partnership with Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Culture and the University of Durham, organised Kyrgyzstan's inaugural National Museum Festival, titled "Local Stories in Museum Spaces" which recognised the importance of engaging local communities in the creation of museum content. The event, organised at the famed Sulaiman-Too Museum in Osh, saw the participation of over 50 museum professionals from 20 museums.

This inaugural Museum Festival also saw ten museums being jointly awarded by the Ministry of Culture and UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU). The prize

money of 400,000 KGS (US \$4500) was given in five categories of distinction. One of the winners, Mahabat Sarybaeva from the Kadamzhai District Museum, Batken Oblast said: "I did not expect that our museum project about the work of women weavers would win a prize. This is very inspiring and gives strength to work with even greater enthusiasm. I really hope that we will all meet at the Second National Museum Festival."

The festival provided a platform for museum specialists to communicate with each other. Talant Sattarkulov, a school museum specialist in Kök-Tash village of Batken Oblast, said, "I work in a small museum in a remote

village, so I often miss the latest museum news. At this festival, I connected with many colleagues and built new bridges."

CHHU was recognised with a Certificate of Appreciation presented by Altynbek Maksutov, Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Culture, for its efforts in promoting cultural heritage and education. CHHU's Director Elmira Kochumkulova noted - "We must ensure that museums use new methods and tools popular with the younger generation. The modern world requires museums to be more creative and media friendly. I am glad that this festival showcased innovative museum initiatives speaking to their viewers in a modern language."

## UCA Addresses UN's Water Conference

The University of Central Asia (UCA) participated in the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York to address the increasing pressure on access to clean water, energy, food production, and ecosystems caused by various global processes such as climate change, rising global population, rapid urban and economic development, and changing diets.

At this UN Conference, UCA partnered with the Tajikistan Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, other intergovernmental organisations as well as sister Aga Khan Development Network agencies to co-host a side event entitled "Adopting the Water-Ener-

gy-Food-Environment (WEFE) Nexus for a water-wise energy transition". This event included discussions on developing joint, climate-resilient investments in water, energy, agriculture and the environment. Prof. Roy Sidle, Director of UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute spoke about the processes affecting water resources and communities in mountainous regions in Central Asia. "There is a lot of storage of water in the High Pamir which we call the Water Towers. Understanding the spatial patterns and temporal changes in climate are vitally important for food security, pasture management, hydropower production, reversing land



Prof. Sidle of UCA addressing the Conference

degradation and even occurrence of natural hazards," - said Prof. Sidle addressing the participants at the event.

Watch the full video of the event [here](#).

## UCA Brings Cutting-Edge Technology to Khorog State University



*The Deputy Governor of Gorno-Badakhshan, and the Rector of Khorog State University admiring the UCA-supported Tourism Centre.*

As part of its Mountain Universities Partnership (MUP), the University of Central Asia (UCA) recently established at Khorog State University (KSU) the following state-of-the-art facilities: geology laboratories, digital library and tourism centre, and an IT hub. KSU is Tajikistan's only public university in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).

The inauguration of these facilities took place at a high-profile event attended by the Deputy Governor of GBAO, Abdunazarzoda Abdunazar Abdolqodir, who remarked "I am intimately familiar with the tireless efforts invested in developing these impressive learning centers. I extend my sincere gratitude to the UCA's MUP programme for this

invaluable contribution." The Rector of KSU, Komilbek Amid Yorbek also thanked UCA for its ongoing support to KSU over the years and requested for this support to continue.

These facilities will offer cutting-edge technology and resources to students of KSU. The tourism center provides an immersive and enriching experience in mountain tourism, adventure tourism, and hospitality. The IT hub will act as a business incubator to enable students develop their business ideas in the IT sector, eventually leading to creation of jobs in the region.

Other than supporting Khorog State University in Tajikistan, UCA-MUP also supports Naryn State University in Kyrgyzstan, Karakorum International University in Pakistan, and Badakhshan University in Afghanistan. All four are public universities and serve a vast majority of the populations in the mountainous areas where they are situated. MUP's goal is to enhance the quality of education at these four mountain universities while contributing to the long-term socio-economic development of the mountainous regions where these universities are situated.

## Partnering with Aga Khan University for a Canadian-certified Workshop

The University of Central Asia's (UCA) Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology collaborated with Aga Khan University to conduct a Canadian certified, Instructional Skills Workshop for the academic staff from across UCA's three schools. Held at UCA Naryn Campus, the workshop, using an intensive experiential learning approach, aimed to improve instructors' skills in learning-centered teaching and provided practical tools to further enhance their teaching effectiveness.

The Workshop equipped participants with information on teaching adult learners, selecting and writing useful learning objectives and lesson plans, techniques for eliciting learner participation, and suggestions for evaluating the learning process. The workshop also emphasised reflection and examination of teaching practices, with feedback focused on the learning process rather than on specific content. This workshop was another example of increasing collaboration between UCA and Aga Khan University.



*Dean Maxim Khomyakov of UCA with Workshop participants*

## UCA Hosts Workshop on Global Warming and Climate Change in Naryn

Through sessions and practical activities such as tree planting, the University of Central Asia has consistently endeavoured to sensitise its students about global warming and climate change. As a continuation of that effort, UCA School of Arts and Science's Naryn Campus organised a workshop for its undergraduate students on climate change and its impact on water resources. Students brainstormed ways to contribute to solutions and enjoyed learning through interactive climate mural games. Students were also excited to learn that their insights would feed into the UN Water Conference 2023.

This Workshop was held in partnership with Central Asia Youth for Water Network, an organisation that aims to foster global youth collaboration.



Students discussing the impact of climate change on water resources during the workshop.

## Exhibition on Preserving Traditional Kyrgyz Arts



Visitors admiring UCA's exhibition on preserving traditional Kyrgyz Art

University of Central Asia's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) hosted an exhibition of traditional Kyrgyz arts as part of the "Bashat" (Origins) international fellowship program that aims to promote the preservation of cultural heritage through innovative approaches. The exhibition's concept reflected a creative understanding of traditional roots and a search for origins and identity. Bashat is an international fellowship programme supported by the World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners, the Arga Bilig Association, the Ru-

ral Development Fund, and UCA Graduate School of Development's CHHU.

The Exhibition was attended by over 500 visitors, including diplomats, journalists, and notable public and cultural figures. It showcased the digital, photo, video, craft art, design, and film products of 10 young Kyrgyz artists. CHHU, in collaboration with prominent archaeologists, historians, and ethnographers, also supported the historical reconstruction of clothing of a 9th-century noble Kyrgyz warrior. The re-

construction was carried out by young researchers and practitioners Askat Ryspaev, Janysh Botoi along with Aibek Baiymbetov, a CHHU research fellow and artistic director of the program. CHHU also supported designer-artist Yntymak Abdylbaev and his project on the philosophical meaning of "Boz" (gray color) in the culture of the nomads of Central Asia. As the exhibition coincided with the national holiday of Nooruz, visitors had the opportunity to witness the process of preparing the traditional festive dish "sumolok" made from germinated grains of wheat, butter, and flour.

"This Exhibition has a special and interesting format, and the content encompasses a wide range of traditional meanings, which are vividly reflected in the creative works of the fellows. It is rare to be able to see such events with such a deep message. Exhibitions such as these are very valuable and important for our modern society," – said Dinara Chochunbayeva, an expert on traditional culture, sharing her impressions about the event. A noted TV journalist, Nazira Aaly Kyzy said, "the exhibition in an unusual way immerses the viewer in an atmosphere of mystery and the search for one's own roots. You can reflect on cultural heritage in a very interactive way such as the premiere presentation of the armor of an ancient nomad warrior. Such exhibitions should be seen by a wide audience."

## UCA Participates at Conference on University Partnerships



*Proceedings of the Conference*

Nurzhan Akimova, Senior Officer at University of Central Asia's International Office, participated in a major regional conference on University Partnerships. The workshop attended by 40 university representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan- discussed a range of essential topics such as student and

academic mobility, credit system transfer, development of international education offices, and strategies for enhancing international student and faculty recruitment. Attendees also received valuable insights into the U.S. higher education system. The event was organised by the American Councils in Bishkek.

## Redefining Civil Society in Central Asia



*CSI Talks in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan*

University of Central Asia's Civil Society Initiative (CSI) recently held a series of in-person and virtual discussions as part of the 'CSI Talks' series, focusing on the study of civil society in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Attended by representatives from academia, civil society, and international organisations, the discussions presented a new agenda for studying civil society in the region. The attendees discussed the need to define "civil society" broadly to encompass a wider audience and not restricting it to non-governmental organizations. "The role of civil society actors initiating self-organization and mobilising resources

to overcome major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the mechanisms for such mobilisation and their sustainability" was presented by the Graduate School of Development's CSI as the next research topic.

CSI researchers Medet Tyulegenov and Nargis Kuchakshoeva presented the results of a systematic literature review of studies on civil society in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan conducted since the 1990s. The discussion aimed to explore the existing conceptual definitions of civil society and identify areas that require further research.

## Book on Media and Communications in Central Asia



University of Central Asia's Visiting Scholar, Dr Elira Turdubaeva, has published a book that provides insights for media scholars, media practitioners, and anyone interested in media, communication industries and the communicative ecology landscape of Central Asia. The publication entitled "Mapping the Media and Communication Landscape of Central Asia: An Anthology of Emerging and Contemporary Issues", is co-edited with Evangelia Papoutsaki, Associate Professor at Unitec-Te Pukenga, New Zealand, and former professor at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences. The work explores close interconnections between Central Asia's complex media landscapes and pressing issues that face the region, including labour migration, violent extremism, gender identity, the impact of climate change on the region, and influence of Russian media in the region.

Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Chair of the Communications and Media Department and Associate Dean at UCA-SAS in Naryn, stated that "This book brings together in a cogent manner the lingering patterns and tectonic shifts in the media and cultural landscapes of Central Asia." The link to the book is: <http://bit.ly/40tXG7a>.

According to Aizharkyn Kozhobekova, CSI Director, "Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the civil society of Central Asia, has been the subject of much study for researchers. After three decades of studies, there is a need to discuss and rethink available literature and what needs to be further investigated regarding civil society." The research findings noted that there is a need to clearly define the conceptualisation of civil society in all its diversity to the community of practice.

## Naryn Campus Receives Praise from Accreditation Agency



Meerim Baialieva, Manager of Academic Operations at SAS, briefing the AAEPO representatives

At its biennial audit, the University of Central Asia's School of Arts and Sciences (UCA-SAS) was lauded by the Kyrgyz Accreditation Agency of Educational Programs and Organizations (AAEPO) for the quality of its interim reporting, a well-organised inspection visit, and a visible demonstration of teamwork.

The main objective of this biennial audit by AAEPO was to follow-up on the recommendations made in 2020, when both academic pro-

grammes offered at UCA-SAS Naryn Campus underwent their initial programme accreditation and obtained full accreditation for five years. The AAEPO team, led by its Director, Dr Baktybek Ismailov, also admired the new infrastructural additions at the SAS Naryn Campus. The AAEPO team also heard with great interest updates by SAS on its new international partnerships, the progress on hybrid/online format of learning, and academic exchanges and professional placements.

## Empowering Youth for Success



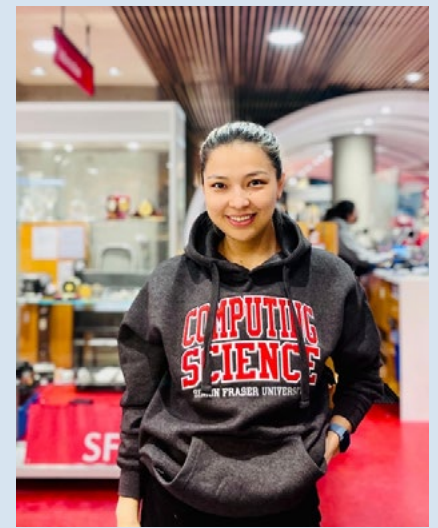
Students of SPCE's digital marketing course in Khujand

The University of Central Asia's School of Professional and Continuing Education (UCA-SPCE) recently launched free courses, for youth aged 18 to 28, in Digital Marketing in Khujand, Tajikistan and in Conversational English and Basic Accounting in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. These trainings aim to equip the 130 enrolled youth with skills needed

to succeed in the labour market.

These courses are supported by the United States Agency for International Development and the Aga Khan Foundation as part of the Local Impact project. This initiative aims to make sustained impact amongst marginalised communities in Asia and Africa.

## Bermet Burkanova's Journey in Data Science



Bermet Burkanova, a fellow of the University of Central Asia's (UCA) Central Asian Faculty Development Programme, has an innovative and inspiring career journey. In 2016, while studying management at Manas International University, she made a bold decision to switch her major and pursue her passion for Computer Science at the University of Central Asia, specializing in Database Management and Machine Learning.

Bermet excelled in her studies, completing several successful Machine Learning, Data Processing, and Data Mining projects, including improving the brain MRI classification model based on the Convolutional Neural Network algorithm. Her work has been published in several reputable scientific journals such as PubMed Central.

After graduating from UCA, Bermet secured an internship with Procter & Gamble's Marketing Technology team, where she quickly excelled. By 2021, Bermet had delivered three major data analyses with over eight billion rows of data, launched two successful marketing campaigns, and begun working on real-time e-commerce reports and stock volume prediction models.

In January 2023, Bermet began her M.Sc. in Robotics at Simon Fraser University on a full scholarship. Bermet's journey demonstrates that by following your passion and putting in hard work, one can achieve great heights.

## UCA Provides its Students Networking Opportunities with Industry



Daniar Amanaliyev, Co-Founder of Ololo Group addressing UCA students

The University of Central Asia's Cooperative Education department organized a Career Networking Event in Bishkek for its undergraduate students from the UCA's School of Arts and Science's Naryn Campus. The event saw participation from senior industry professionals and offered UCA students the opportunity to connect with potential employers, access career-related resources, and gain

knowledge about labor market trends. Representatives from reputable international organizations, including Oxus, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, UNICEF, and Ololo participated at the event. A UCA alum, Suyuna Dadybaeva, pursuing her Masters at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore gave a talk about life after graduation. There were also workshops on a range of topics including on Artificial Intelligence,

with eminent speakers such as the CEO of Brozasia.

Students also had the opportunity to visit offices of technology companies and submit their resumes for internship opportunities. The students were very appreciative of the valuable opportunity to network with industry professionals and gain insights into potential career paths.

## UCA Presents 600 Books on Economics for Public School Libraries

At a recent meeting with Mr. Kanybek Imanaliyev, Minister of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, the University of Central Asia presented 600 copies of Economics for use in public school libraries in Naryn, Yssyk-Kol, and Chui oblasts. This valuable resource covers the fundamental concepts of economics and is intended to assist school students with enhancing their financial literacy. These books have been translated into Kyrgyz and Russian by UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration, with support from the Economic Fundamentals Initiative (EFI).

During the meeting, Minister Imanaliyev was also briefed about the International Economics Olympiad being hosted by UCA in partnership with EFI. Students in grades 9-11 can participate in this Olympiad free of charge and the final stage will be held in September 2023 in Slovakia. The Olympiad aims to increase school students' awareness of financial literacy and help them make conscious choices about their future profession, focusing on the needs of the labor market.



Minister Kanybek Imanaliyev (right) receiving the Economics books from UCA representatives

At this occasion, Minister Imanaliyev was also presented with UCA's recent publication on the ancient monuments of Tenir-Too, a fundamental work authored by Dr. Kubatbek Tabaldiev, a well-known archaeologist of Kyrgyzstan. The Minister was pleased to note that the book examines the rich cultural

history of ancient and medieval tribes who inhabited the intermountain and foothill areas of the Tenir-Too (Tien-Shan) mountain range. He was informed that the book provides insights into the complex archeological past of ancient populations that inhabited the contemporary territory of Kyrgyzstan.

## UCA Students Participate in the Central Asian Tech Forum

To inspire students to further promote IT products and services in the field of education, UCA's School of Arts and Sciences arranged for its students to attend the Central Asian Tech Forum 2023 in Bishkek. The Forum brought together over 600 participants, including representatives from 50 local and global companies, such as Amazon and JETRO.

Myrza Karimov, Head of UCA's Co-operative Education Programme, was one of the speakers at the Forum. During the discussion, Myrza Karimov highlighted the importance of collaboration between universities and the IT industry. He also emphasized the need to provide hands-on skills to students to bridge the gap between academia and the job market.



Myrza Karimov (left) at the forum panel discussion. Others L to R: Almaz Chanachev (EPAM Kyrgyzstan), Elena Kazinachikova (IT Academy), Andrey Gurinov (Kanda Software) and Seth Fearey (American University of Central Asia)

## Nowruz Celebrations at UCA Campuses

Nowruz has been celebrated for over 3,000 years by diverse communities spanning the Balkans to the Caucasus and in South and Central Asia. This festival, which marks the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere, was celebrated at the University of Central Asia's campuses in Khorog and Naryn.

The festivities included cultural performances, including music, dance, and poetry. It was also an opportunity for the UCA community to come together and experience the richness and diversity of cultures represented at UCA.



UCA students at the Khorog Campus showcasing their national dresses



Demonstration of Nowruz rituals at Naryn Campus



Exhibition of traditional clothes dedicated to Nowruz



Nowruz celebration at Naryn Campus

## SPCE Tekeli Hosts Career Guidance for Students



School students in Tekeli who completed SPCE's Career Guidance Training.

In partnership with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education (MoE), UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) is offering career guidance sessions to school-going students in Tekeli, Kazakhstan. The comprehensive career-guidance sessions include psychometric and career guidance tests. These sessions provide students an analysis of the labor market, including an awareness of the sunrise industries. At the end of the training, students develop individualised action plans to attain their career goals.

The training helps students identify their professional interests, make informed career choices and take responsibility for their own career development. These sessions also act as a support group for participating students. N. Estibaev, MoE's Head of the Department in Tekeli, was very appreciative of SPCE's efforts in providing this much-needed and crucial training to students.

## SPCE Students Selected for Future Leaders Exchange Programme



SPCE students in Khorog selected for FLEX 2023

Ten students of the University of Central Asia's School of Professional and Continuing Education (UCA-SPCE) have been selected in the very competitive Future Leaders Exchange Programme (FLEX). This exchange opportunity includes study abroad for a year at a high school in the United States. Of the ten selected students, seven are from UCA-SPCE Khorog, Tajikistan and three from UCA-SPCE Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.

Nazarmo Muborakshoeva, a selected student from SPCE Khorog said, "SPCE has provided me with an exceptional education that has not only helped me excel academically, but also equipped me with valuable interpersonal skills that has prepared me well for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead." Ainazik Boronbaeva, an SPCE student from Naryn who was selected for this programme, said, "I am thrilled to be selected for the FLEX programme. I am determined to make the most of this opportunity."

## Talas Faith Leaders Visit UCA Naryn Campus







Faith leaders from Talas visiting UCA's Naryn Campus




Based on the request of the Qadi (local faith leader) of Naryn Oblast, Kyrgyzstan, the University Central Asia School of Arts and Science's Naryn Campus welcomed a group of faith leaders from the Talas Oblast. The delegation found the visit informative and enlightening.

Following the campus tour, the Qadi of Talas Oblast expressed admiration for UCA, stating: "Seeing is believing. We were very pleased to visit the campus. I would like my daughter to study at UCA. Now that we have detailed and reliable information about UCA, we will share it with others. Prince Aga Khan, a Harvard University graduate, has founded one of the best universities in the world, and we are very happy that it is established in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan."

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