

Khorog Centre for Entrepreneurship Brings New Hope to Local Businesses



At the opening ceremony, Dilovar Butabekov, Director of SPCE, shares the vision and objectives of the Khorog Centre for Entrepreneurship.

Businesses ravaged by the Covid pandemic found new hope in the opening of the Khorog Centre for Entrepreneurship (KCE) on August 17. Established by the University of Central Asia's (UCA) School

of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), the Centre aims at providing advice, training, and support to generate income and promote market development for small business leaders and farmers

in the region. It is part of Tajikistan's Local Economic Development in Selected High-Mountain Regions Project, which aims to strengthen the competitiveness of various enterprises.

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UCA Welcomes Class of 2026



Class of 2026 visiting a city park in Khorog as part of their Orientation Week.

The Student Life Team along with the Orientation Crew welcomed the Class of 2026 on September 1st, for a week full of games, activities, and workshops.

"Orientation is a period before the academic year starts when new students become familiar with the campus and policies of UCA. During this time, we welcome them and create an environment so they can have a productive and successful year. This year's theme is: Explore the Possibilities," says Sherov Naimov, Student Life Advisor at UCA.

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Khorog Centre for Entrepreneurship

Why does a university such as UCA promote entrepreneurship? The Rector of UCA, Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, responded in his welcome address:

“The answer is simple but also complicated...It is simple because UCA is an integral part of the Aga Khan Development Network, whose simple and clear objective is improving the quality of life of people. It is complicated because an educational institution is about knowledge...but if we want to improve the quality of life of people, this knowledge has to find a pathway and means to support and celebrate human endeavour through entrepreneurship.”

The pandemic has significantly impacted global economic conditions, and the month-

ly earnings of individual entrepreneurs have declined by 54% in the GBAO region of Tajikistan. To help people emerge from this challenging situation, KCE will introduce new and innovative ways to build and support highly competitive businesses, regional brands, and business linkages by bringing together startups, business consultants, and investors from the region and around the world.

Mrs. Sabine Olthof, Country Director, The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH said during her remarks at the ceremony, “One idea that I personally like very much is the establishment of a Credit Union of Alumni under the Centre for Entrepreneurship to support new emerging and

existing businesses.” The Khorog Centre for Entrepreneurship has been established with generous support from GIZ, in cooperation with the Aga Khan Foundation, Tajikistan.

Among the many distinguished guests at the opening ceremony was Anvar Imatshozoda, Deputy Governor of GBAO who extended his gratitude to the Tajik Government and UCA for their ongoing efforts to promote the development of young people, “The result is that today the graduates of the University are engaged not only in the country but also abroad in the largest scientific and cultural centers of the world.”

Watch the [full ceremony](#).

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UCA Welcomes Class of 2026

Every year, the incoming cohort arrives on the campus a week before the commencement of classes to help them adapt to the new environment and socialize. However, the orientation week for this year’s cohort will be slightly different amidst the pandemic. SAS is planning to commence classes in a hybrid mode starting from 6 September 2021, the student orientation is also being conducted online.

UCA welcomed 70 students from Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Syria in the Class of 2026. Over 70% of the incoming class come from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

“Despite the challenges of living with Covid-19, which has affected student recruitment and admissions this year, bright and talented students from the remote villag-



Orientation Crew along with the Student Life Team brainstorm a fun week for the incoming class.

es, small towns and cities of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan succeeded in their aspiration to apply and get admitted to UCA. Wishing the newly admitted students the best of luck to thrive in the new UCA adventure,” says Chynara Turatbek, Head of Student Recruitment, SAS.

Publications



UCA Annual Report for 2020

The University of Central Asia is pleased to share its Annual Report for 2020. The Report highlights UCA’s major initiatives, events, and accomplishments during 2020.

The Annual Report is available in [English](#) and [Russian](#) on UCA’s website, and can also be downloaded as a pdf for sharing.

Past issues of the Annual Report, as well as copies of the monthly UCA News, are available at: <https://bit.ly/UCAREports-ru> and <https://bit.ly/UCANews-en>.

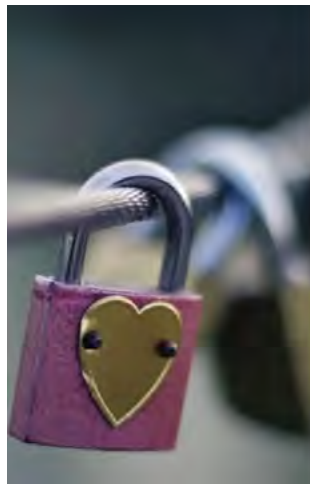
Summer Institute Organises Social-Emotional Workshop

UCA successfully concluded the Social-Emotional Workshop organised for its students, faculty, and staff to help them effectively communicate, maintain their mental health, and perform conflict analysis to boost social-emotional intelligence during these unprecedented times.

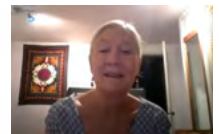
“When employees are healthy and they enjoy coming to work, everything improves including productivity and teamwork,” says Robin Higgins, University Counsellor at UCA.

The workshop was based on three modules: Communicating Effectively in a Pluralistic World, Conflict Analysis and Transformation, and Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing. The sessions were facilitated by Mary-Ann Morris, Nursing Professor and Health Educator; Randy Janzen, Conflict Transformation Instructor, and Jonny Morris, CEO of Canadian Mental Health, along with UCA’s faculty and staff.

One of the participants, Natalia Stavitskaia, Finance Manager at UCA, shared her experience from the workshop: “Since I joined UCA, my first Summer Institute [mental health workshop] was in 2018. I found that for myself my mental health at work is almost as important as my professional knowledge...Being mentally healthy allows me to help others - to see if there are any issues with my team, or any problems faced by my colleagues, and offer help – personal or professional. I am using techniques I have learned with workshop organisers, counselors and groupmates to improve my ability to listen to myself and others, including my family and friends.”



Trust and Safety



- Some of these topics might be sensitive or painful for you. Please take care of yourself. If you need to take a break or do not want to talk in a break-out group that, is you practicing personal boundaries and self care!
- Some people come from the same organizations. What people choose to share should be **confidential**. If you are sharing something about your workplace, please do not use names and try give general examples.
- We are all here to learn from each other – we are a community of practice exploring concepts and experimenting with what works best for each of us in our individual contexts.

Robin Higgins, University Counsellor, conducting the online mental health workshop.

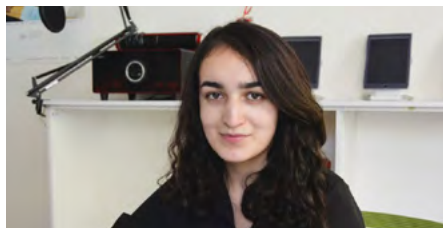
Over 500 Internships Announced by Co-operative Education Office in 2020-21

Every summer, undergraduate students at UCA intern at various regional and international organisations within their respective fields to apply theoretical classroom knowledge in a professional environment. The School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) students are required to complete 1,440 hours of Co-operative Education (Co-op) within the four years of their degree programme. For the academic year 2020-21, the Co-op office announced over 500 internship opportunities for SAS students.



Zainab Muborakshoeva, BA Global Economics, Class of 2023

“This summer, I am doing an internship at ConsumerCentriX, a strategy consulting firm. I was hired for a special project in partnership with the International Finance Corporation, and we are analysing issues faced by female entrepreneurs in Central Asia. I assist my advisor with desk research, assessment of research findings, and quantitative analysis of datasets. I am lucky to be part of this experience at such a young age and am happy to be part of a dynamic intellectual team.”



Gulborbonu Mirzoeva, BA Communications and Media, Class of 2023

“I always wanted to work with the Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR), and luckily this summer, I got accepted. The experience has helped me to not only stay informed about the region but to also learn trends and techniques used by various media organisations. This internship has given me a chance to experience the sphere of journalism before my graduation. It has provided me an assurance that I made the right choice by choosing this field.”



Azra Nisar, BSc Computer Science, Class of 2024

“I started my summer internship at M-Vector in the research department in June, and I got an amazing chance to work closely with their research team. Through this opportunity, I refined my research skills. Since UCA is also a research university, we work on research papers since the very first year. My aim is to be a part of multifarious research projects in the future.”

UK and Japan Ambassadors Visit UCA Khorog Campus

Matthew Lawson, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Tajikistan, and Takayuki Miyashita, Ambassador of Japan to Tajikistan, visited UCA's Khorog campus in August 2021.

The Ambassadors were briefed about the academic programmes, toured the facilities. Inspired by the quality of education at the University, Ambassador Miyashita remarked, "If I were younger, I would certainly apply." He added, "The University of Central Asia will be a driving force in Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan."

Ambassador Lawson lauded the quality of construction on the campus and the development vision of UCA for the mountain communities. He said, "I was impressed to see a cutting-edge university right in the middle of mountains. With campuses in Khorog, Naryn and Tekeli, UCA drives positive economic and social changes in mountainous communities by offering high-quality globally recognised education. Innovative classrooms, laboratories, a big library with a fine collection of academic textbooks – the University of Central Asia has a lot to offer to make a great academic journey for its students."



Professor Roy Sidle, Director of UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute briefing Ambassador Takayuki Miyashita (right).



Ambassador Matthew Lawson browsing the library at the Khorog campus.

International Office Awards Twelve Scholarships in Two Years



SAS Faculty at the Khorog campus (L to R): Shams Sharif, Makhfirat Olimshoeva, Dr Salim Sumar (Director, International Office) and Maqsd Suriev.

The University of Central Asia's International Office has awarded twelve scholarships for the academic years 2020-22 to deserving candidates across Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan to pursue their academic careers internationally.

"Without the establishment of the International Office and the many strong and quality partnerships it has established in a relatively short time with the best universities in the world, all of this would remain a pipedream for me and many

others," says Makhfirat Olimshoeva, Interdisciplinary PhD student at the Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Canada.

Olimshoeva hails from Khorog, Tajikistan, and has been awarded a full scholarship to pursue postgraduate studies as part of the Central Asian Faculty Development Programme (CAFDP) at UCA. She has been serving as a faculty at the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) before joining SFU and is expected to return to UCA upon completion of her studies to either teach or conduct research. The programme is designed to ensure that scholars from the region are strongly represented in UCA's faculty.

CAFDP has awarded 62 scholarships since 2008. Along with Olimshoeva are two more faculty members from SAS currently pursuing their PhDs at SFU – Shams Sharif and Maqsd Suriev.

AKHP Staff Present Papers at the International Summer School



Dr Issayeva (left) moderating an event organised by the International Summer School.

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) staff shared their pedagogical and methodological experiences at the International Summer School organised by the International Center for the Rapprochement of Cultures under the auspices of UNESCO in August 2021.

Dr Pulat Shozimov, Acting Head and

Faculty Development Programme (FDP) Manager; Dr Nurzhauar Issayeva, FDP Coordinator for Kazakhstan; Marifat Alifbekova, Humanities Fellow, and Obidkhon Kurbonkhonov, Project Coordinator from AKHP were invited to present papers. Among the topics were Method of Cross-Disciplinary Discourse in Pedagogy as a Way of Conceptual Rapprochement

of Diverse Cultures, and Methods of Interpretations Through the Perspective of the Connection between Context, Concept and Content. Dr Issayeva was also involved as one of the organisers and moderators of the event.

“The main success of AKHP presentations at the Summer International School was related to the interconnection between theory/innovations and practice via pedagogy, sciences and social activities through AKHP debates around key fundamental issues that come from the Central Asian context,” said Dr Pulat Shozimov.

The Summer School invited over 100 teachers and administrators from Central Asia, Russia and Azerbaijan to share innovative methods for improving education. There were 16 presenters at the event, of which 50% were affiliated with AKHP. The event focused on providing a platform to create dialogue and develop competencies among teachers of the region. AKHP staff shared pedagogical case studies from courses taught under the Humanities in English project.

AKHP Debate Club Celebrates 9th Anniversary

The Aga Khan Humanities Project celebrated the 9th anniversary of its Debate Club by organising a Republic Debate Tournament in August 2021. The tournament gathered 40 best debaters and top 10 adjudicators from across Tajikistan to discuss various economic, political, and social issues.



Anusha Ashurova, a student at UCA’s School of Arts and Sciences attended the tournament as one of the participants and commented:

“It gave me a great opportunity to improve my critical thinking skills. I got a chance to meet incredible personalities, share experiences and improve my public speaking skills. I also exchanged ideas about important issues with open-minded people.”

AKHP debates are considered among the prestigious tournaments across the



AKHP Debate Club participants are among the best debaters and adjudicators in Tajikistan.

country. It is the first club in Tajikistan to organize debate competitions in the English language. The club coordinators have also played a key role in implementing the

widely recognized Cross-Debate Format in the country, and successfully organised local, regional, and international debating activities.

Second Cycle of the Executive Entrepreneurship Training Starts

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education successfully concluded a Training of Trainers (ToT) in Naryn and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The month-long training was attended by 13 local business trainers, who polished their existing skills and gained new ones by designing an Entrepreneurship and Incubation programme from scratch.

A leading business advisor, Faisal Sherijan, conducted the training within the framework of an ongoing project - Local Impact: A Transformative Partnership in Asia and Africa. As part of the training, participants met various entrepreneurs, government representatives, and NGO workers to initiate open dialogues and were inspired to become entrepreneurial thinkers and business creators.

The programme was delivered in two parts: training, and module development. The training was delivered at the SPCE Centre in Naryn, where participants enjoyed the scenic beauty of the town



Participants during a field trip to the local leather shop in Naryn.

while acquiring new skills. During the module development, the cohort visited Bishkek to start work on the development of their individual training modules which included curricula, concept notes, and learning materials. The trainers will now interact with a broader audience in September, including marginalized youth. The Local Impact project is funded by USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation.

SPCE Graduate Attends Türksoy

SPCE graduate, Aidana Arzymatova, participated in an international festival in Turkey to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the independence of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The event was organised by "Türksoy" - International Organization of Turkic Culture.

Arzymatova being a member of the "Exclusive Dance Group" based in Bishkek, was invited to perform traditional and national dances at the festival. She performed at various festivals and concerts in Istanbul, Antalya, Karaman, Konya, Cappadocia and Ankara during her trip. Arzymatova, along with her fellow dancers, also performed in a concert organised in collaboration with the Antalya Bilim College to strengthen friendship between Kyrgyzstan and Turkey.











SPCE graduate, Aidana Arzymatova (second from left), along with her colleagues from dance group at the Festival.

Arzymatova graduated this year from the Academic Achievement Programme offered at SPCE, which is designed to help high school students gain admission to popular universities.

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