

Edil Baisalov Visits UCA Naryn Campus



Edil Baisalov (2nd from right) in the TV Studio during the campus tour. L to R: Dr Soheil Ashrafi (Associate Dean, Naryn Campus), Dr Maxim Khomyakov, and Nazar Aitiev (Facilities Manager, UCA).

Edil Baisalov, the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan, visited the UCA Naryn Campus on 7 June to discuss prospective collaborations. He was accompanied by Sadykova Elmira Amanatovna, Deputy Governor of Naryn Oblast, and Esenamanova Saltanat Kadyrovna, Head of Social Department at the Naryn Governor's Office. Mr Baisalov was warm-

ly welcomed by Dr Maxim Khomyakov, Dean of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, along with faculty members.

Mr Baisalov expressed admiration for the long-term development projects led by the Aga Khan Development Network including UCA. He shared his vision of investing in the educational sector of

the country and was pleased to know that UCA is expanding its academic programmes to include the establishment of graduate and post-graduate programmes.

Dr Khomyakov briefed the Deputy Chairman about student-led projects and the recently launched Naryn Urban Resilience Programme and the Tourism Development Programme.

Joint Paper on Faculty Development Presented by UCA and SFU

The University of Central Asia and Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, Canada) presented a paper on Lessons from Joint Faculty Development Programmes at the prestigious Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) Annual Conference and Exhibition 2022. It brought together thousands of professionals who are passionate about international education from across the globe, provided networking opportunities, and sharing new developments in international education.

Participating from UCA were Dr. Salim Sumar, Director of Academic Development and International Office, and Makhfirat Olimshoeva, UCA faculty and PhD candidate at SFU. Representing SFU was Shaheen Nanji, Executive Director at SFU International. The paper on "Bringing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) into International Collaborations for Faculty Development", received much acclaim at the Conference.

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Civic Education in Kyrgyzstan

UCA's Civil Society Initiative hosted a panel discussion to discuss the results of a recently conducted study on the issue of citizenship in Kyrgyzstan. In collaboration with the Association of Smart Zharan, Soros Foundation (Kyrgyzstan), and UCA, the PIL Research Company conducted a study to assess the level of civic knowledge, socially conscious initiatives, and socio-political understanding among the population of Kyrgyzstan.

The study was conducted using the methodology of "Citizenship Test", which has been primarily tested in several post-Soviet countries including Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. The study conducted an unbiased assessment of the situation of civil society in the country. The discussion was facilitated by Medet Tyulegenov, a Political Scientist and Civil



Experts meeting at UCA for a panel discussion on Civic Education in Kyrgyzstan.

Society Expert, and attended by representatives from the education sector. The participants worked on the development of proposals and recommendations for

the implementation of approaches and tools within the educational sector to enhance civic education in Kyrgyzstan.

UCA Students Learn Job Hunting Skill on Career Day



UCA students participating in an interactive session on job hunting skills in Dushanbe.

Bringing together over 65 national and international companies altogether in Dushanbe and Bishkek, UCA's Co-operative Education Department organised successful Career Days for students of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences.

Successful entrepreneurs and leading professionals from various fields, along with representatives from student exchange programmes, presented their companies and interacted with UCA's management, faculty and students. Distinguished speakers conducted interactive sessions on professional growth, significance of networking, job applications, and related skills. HR professionals from leading companies conducted mock interviews and provided their valuable feedback to the students.

Students also had an opportunity to submit their resumes and build networks. Several companies offered students internships during the Career Day. UCA alumni also participated in the event and shared key lessons learned in the corporate market and gave tips to prepare for professional life.

Creating Opportunities for UCA Students



At the Winter School. From left to right: Prof Gordon Hush (Head of the Innovation School, Glasgow School of Art), Prof Philipp Heidkamp (Professor, Koln International School of Design), Dr Albert Fuster (Academic Director, Barcelona School of Design and Engineering) and Dr Soheil Ashrafi (UCA).

Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, attended the Winter School at the Innovation School of the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland. The week-long winter school helps participants from various schools to reflect and conceptualize the ever-evolving relationship between humans, technology, and nature.

The visit was aimed at creating opportunities for UCA students to share their views and skillsets in international and multi-disciplinary settings. "The opportunity will allow them to embrace the concept of 'designing conversations' and building new ways of thinking, and responding to contemporary questions and concerns," said Dr Ashrafi.

Training of Teachers in Bishkek



Dr Hamid Khan answering questions from school teachers.

In collaboration with the Mayor's Office Education Department in Bishkek, UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education conducted a Professional Development Training workshop for 117 school teachers.

"It seems very simple, but techniques taught helped me understand why students struggle when learning new words. We learnt about effective and interesting learning tools to expand the vocabulary of students based on case studies from real

life. We also learned how to teach grammar and basic language skills of reading, speaking, listening, and writing," said Bakhtugulova Aidai, English Teacher from the Educational Complex School Gymnasium 12.

Dr Hamid Khan, Assistant Professor at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, conducted the two-day workshop for teachers on effective pedagogies for teaching the English language.

Public Lecture:

Green Economy Model for the Kyrgyz Republic



Dr Temirkulov conducting the Public Lecture at UCA in Bishkek.

Kyrgyzstan is applying principles of green economy to explore the full economic potential of the country. To discuss opportu-

nities for sustainable economic growth and the potential of a Green Economy Model, UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Admin-

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UCA and SFU Present Paper on Faculty Development

The paper included global EDI applications and challenges as well as observations from the experiences of UCA and SFU on faculty development. Over the past decade, national trends have shown great progress in the commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion which are included in the strategic plan at the national level, but the global dimension appears to be missing. The authors concluded that EDI should continue to celebrate human differences because while talent is global, opportunities may not be.

Among the learning objectives highlighted in the joint presentation were: 1) To share lessons learned about effective international partnerships for faculty development; 2) To deepen understanding about how to incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations and approaches in such collaborations; 3) To explore options and ideas for moving toward better, and next generation international partnerships between the East and the West.

SFU is one of the significant partners of UCA's Central Asian Faculty Development Programme. Currently, three faculty members and one UCA alumna are enrolled at SFU pursuing their graduate and post-graduate degrees.

istration invited Dr Azamat Temirkulov, Head of the Department of Analysis and Monitoring of Reforms at the Administration of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. During the lecture, Dr Temirkulov addressed a wide range of issues related to economic security and environmental sustainability of the country. He spoke about the importance of rotational grazing for cattle that improves pasture quality in the long term. He also addressed the importance of exploring alternative sources of income for farmers, and how deforestation leads to loss of bio-diversity.

The Green Economy Model was developed by the Kyrgyz Government along with a group of experts in 2016, which is being currently implemented by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic.

TEDxUCA Naryn Explores Why Less is More

In the contemporary world, where happiness often depends on material possessions, does authentic happiness rely on the concept of "less is more"? Living in an age of an over abundance of information and constant distractions, UCA students from the Naryn Campus organised TEDx Talks bringing together speakers from diverse professional and ethnic backgrounds.

Sharing childhood struggles due to speech defects, Dinara Ruslan, the CEO and Founder of Codify (a group of IT companies) in Kyrgyzstan, shared her journey from hardships to becoming one of the leading entrepreneurs in the country.

Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, shared his insights on the topic of "Attention and Presencing" saying that as a conscious being we come across the world through moments of attention, directing our mind at certain things immediately present to us or in the far distance.

The Co-Founder of the Ololo Group of Companies in Kyrgyzstan, Ainura Amanalieva, explored the concept of financial literacy in Central Asia by shedding light on how minimalism can help allocate money in a financially sound manner to avoid expenditures that do not add value to one's life.



During her Tedx Talk, Ainura explains how Ololo grew from only \$150 of initial capital to the largest chain of co-working spaces in Central Asia.

Abdullah Nazari, a freshman student at UCA, shared his understanding of consciously recognizing bad habits and being able to transform oneself into a better version in order to live a productive life. Zarastin Kholbash, a senior student, talked about the significance of minimalism in creating healthy and harmonious relationships. She highlighted the concept of being authentically honest with oneself to attract the right people into one's life.

Encouraging people to reduce social media consumption and strive towards finding purpose in life, Alif Khalfan, Vice President of the Product Strategy at The Walt Disney

Company, shared his experience of living a minimalist lifestyle.

Death of a near and dear can often be a profoundly life changing experience. Lucy Palmer, Senior Lecturer at UCA, explored experiences of losing close family and friends, and shared the wisdom and clarity found during this transitioning process.

As part of the Tedx Talks, Naryn Campus also hosted a World Café, where Mawlana Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's life was celebrated by performing his poetry and remembering his teachings about adopting simplicity in life.

Developing Human Capital in Mountainous Regions

Prof Dr Sohail Naqvi, Rector of UCA, along with Prof Dr Mohssen Moazzen, Chair and Professor of the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department, and Aliyor Marodaseynov, Programme Coordinator of the Mountain Universities Partnership, visited the Khorog State University to further extend cooperation between the two institutions.

During the visit, UCA presented new equipment for Gemology to KSU's Geology Department within the framework of the Mountain Universities Partnership (MUP) programme. The programme has been established to support mountain universities in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan by improving the quality of education in the region and contributing to the socio-economic development of communities.



During a tour of the facilities. L to R: Prof Sohail Naqvi, Dr Moazzen, Tavfiq Mirzoev (Dean of Natural Sciences Department, KSU) and Aliyor Marodaseynov.

Prof Naqvi toured the facilities of KSU including the geology laboratory and the digital library, which has been also established within the MUP programme.

Ustatshakirt Musical Ensemble Performs at UCA



A dance performed by Ustatshakirt at UCA.

Established within the Aga Khan Music Programme, the Musical Ensemble “Ustatshakirt” is an initiative dedicated to the importance of revitalizing local musical traditions in Kyrgyzstan. Striving towards this objective, Ustatshakirt has remained an active

collaborator with educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities throughout the seven regions of the country offering seminars, training, and short courses.

In April, the ensemble gave an entertaining musical and theatrical performance “Aksatkyn & Myrza uul” at UCA’s Central Administration Office. Reviving an old epic, the group of young performers presented the love story with modern music, live characters, and beautiful choreography.

Along with staff from UCA, the performance was attended by Dr Barkat Fazal, AKDN Diplomatic Representative to Kyrgyzstan) accompanied by Mrs Minaz Fazal, staff members from AKDN, and senior management of UCA.

Improvising Music in Kyrgyzstan



Students from the Naryn Child Arts School preparing to perform at the Jash Kairyk project.

Within the framework of the Cultural Production Programme by UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit, Kyrgyz Kairyk (a musical and educational project) has launched Jash Kairyk for students and teachers across Kyrgyzstan.

Jash Kairyk (fresh/new melody) is a musical programme dedicated to helping people discover musical improvisations. “It gives students the lifelong love and appreciation for music and performance,” said Dastan Birimkulov, a Kyrgyz musician and composer, who is leading the project.

The four-day programme delivers improvisation and composition sessions concluding with a mini-concert showcasing performances by young musicians attend-

ing musical schools.

Jash Kairyk is a younger version of Kyrgyz Kairyk, a programme that is working to preserve and develop the musical heritage of the nomadic people of Central Asia through composing, mastering the performance techniques of Kyrgyz music, and revitalizing traditional Kyrgyz music.

The Jash Kairyk programme was launched in the Naryn region in April, and it will also be travelling to Issyk-Kul region. Young musicians who are currently involved in the programme also receive an opportunity to learn “Ethnosolfeggio”, the recently launched musical textbook based on Kyrgyz melodies developed with the support of the University of Central Asia.

UCA becomes a Stepping Stone to Success



Daniyar Nurlanbekov, a student at the School of Professional and Continuing Education’s uniquely designed Academic Achievement Programme (AAP), has been selected for the international student exchange programme – FLEX 2022.

Daniyar joined SPCE Naryn in October 2021 and has demonstrated excellent progress in his studies especially with learning the English language. One of his teachers, Val Eubanks, said, “Daniyar has amazed me with his diligence, perseverance, focus, maturity and optimistic outlook on life.”

AAP has been designed to help students from developing regions to prepare for admission in reputable universities by gaining strong knowledge and skills in English, Math and Science.

UCA Research Fellow Wins Oumirserik Kassenov Grant

Zalina Enikeeva, Research Fellow at UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration, has been awarded the Oumirserik Kassenov grant by the Central Asia Program of the George Washington University and the Central Asian Analytical Network.

Recognising her significant research contribution in the area of tourism, Zalina's research on the state of winter tourism in Karakol (a popular tourist destination) has been published by the Central Asia Program.

Kyrgyzstan is the second most popular tourist destination for Kazakh population, after Russia. However, the number of Kazakh tourists to Kyrgyzstan has been decreasing due to economic downturn caused by the devaluation of the Kazakh currency. The paper analyses the situation of tourism in Karakol prior to, and during the pandemic.



Downhill skiing at the Karakol ski resort.

Zalina conducted interviews with local experts in the tourism sector, owners of tourism-related businesses, tourists from Kazakhstan, and state authorities to identify problems that are deterring tourists. There are several challenges, including distance of the resort from Kazakhstan, poor quality of roads in the city of Karakol,

and a lack of fun activities other than skiing. Moreover, southern Kazakhstan has a range of ski bases that compete with the Karakol ski resort.

Read full paper: <https://centralasiaprogram.org/digital-transformation-tourism-sector-analysis-almaty-karakol-case>.

Employee Spotlight

Gulru Sharipova's Promising Track Record at UCA



Gulru Sharipova (2nd from left), with her colleagues at UCA's Finance Department.

"I joined the University of Central Asia in 2002, when we had a few chairs and tables with one copy machine in our office." Originally from Khorog, Tajikistan, Gulru Sharipova has been associated with UCA for 20 years in various capacities, making a valuable contribution towards the development of mountain communities.

"Prior to joining UCA as a Training Coordinator at the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), I was

also involved in conducting research to identify courses in demand in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast region." Gulru was part of the team that assisted in setting up the programme during the early days of SPCE in Khorog. She remained with SPCE in various positions until 2018, when she came to Bishkek to work at UCA as Finance Officer.

"Over the years, UCA has helped me in climbing the professional and academic

ladder. I have benefitted from attending several programmes including graduating with an Executive MBA from the Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University as part of UCA's staff development initiatives."

Gulru takes every opportunity to contribute to improving the lives of young people by investing in her hometown, and has developed and consulted on a number of entrepreneurship projects at SPCE. "Even now, whenever I visit home during vacations, I take time to volunteer and assist students in developing their business plans and strategies. Witnessing the success of my students is one of the pleasures I deeply cherish in my life."

With an experience of two decades witnessing the expansion of UCA facilities across four countries, Gulru shared her experience of working with diverse nationalities, "UCA is an extremely unique project in Central Asia that not only encourages collaboration across countries, but also promotes the values of diversity and pluralism among its staff, and makes us feel like a family."

UCA Students Setting Benchmarks in IT Research

Innovation is a continuous process that has been embraced by the human race for centuries. It is an endless journey that consists of small improvements while aiming to capitalize on huge opportunities down the road. Either a person comes up with a new way of thinking or innovates a new technology, the end-product remains the addition of value that leads to improving the overall quality of life.

With the establishment of the University of Central Asia (UCA) near the high mountains of Tian Shan in Naryn, and the Pamirs in Khorog, the University aims to educate young minds from the regional nations to be able to compete in a rapidly evolving world.

As the second cohort of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences comes closer to their graduation, the Computer Science students have set a benchmark by implementing socially conscious innovative models during their final dissertation projects. From developing a multi-chain token using Blockchain technology, to proposing an efficient methodology for brain MRI classifications, the Class of 2022 is graduating with a dynamic set of ideas, skills and techniques to effectively compete in the global market.

Mehmood Yar Baig, one of the students at UCA, has developed a technique to detect deepfake videos on the internet. "With the growth of cybercrime and fake news, it has become even more important for organisations to distinguish between real news and propaganda. Using decisive machine-learning algorithms, it can assist in identifying if the video is featuring a real or a fake person."

Inspired by the concern of energy crisis and climate change, Sarvinoz Toshpulotova has developed a smart methodology for predicting energy consumption in homes. Using regression-based learning techniques, Sarvinoz has developed a technology to replace manual labor with a software that simultaneously monitors consumption and controls wastage. She has tested four models and the best results have been delivered by the Classification and Regression Tree.

Among several novel projects is a pro-



Dr Ayman Aljarbough, Chair of the Department of Computer Science at UCA, supervising student dissertations.

posed methodology by Jawad Haider of an efficient brain MRI classification. "Brain MRI is the first step towards detecting brain tumor. To reduce the complexity of the process, the proposed model performs preprocessing, feature extraction, and classification, by removing unnecessary information and providing good quality MRI images with reduced noise. The result provides a simplified response to whether the MRI is normal or not." Jawad's proposed method achieves 97.14% accurate results using the Decision Tree model.

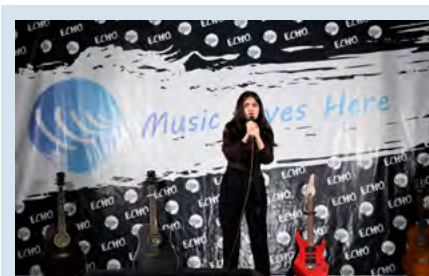
While cryptocurrency's future is still in question, Kishvar Afzunov, has developed a multichain token using Blockchain technology. Known for its security and decentralized platform, the model can be implemented within organisations for activities, such as, voting. "There would be no central subject in the online community as anyone who has a token will have

the right to vote." The technology defeats many destructive human traits that lead to inaccurate results and manipulation.

Expanding the scope of student projects, Attique Ahmad, has simulated biological patterns using the Gray-Scott model. "As nature exhibits a vast diversity of structures within living and non-living organisms, I have been always intrigued by the thought of these organisms sharing similar mathematical patterns." Attique's project widens the possibility of allowing students and professionals from various fields to be able to study complex organisms. The simulation has proven to benefit the research community in proposing treatments in the field of medicine.

Based in rural locations, one of the primary objectives of UCA is to provide equal and quality access to education. Valeriya Nikiforova has developed a platform of a free digital library for underprivileged communities. Lack of access to high-speed internet prevent people from rural communities to realise their full potential. Valeriya's platform is a low-cost solution to the limitations in remote regions. "The significant difference between this platform and other online sources is that the materials will be downloaded to a local server which can then be accessed by anyone connected to it."

The soon-to-be graduates of the University of Central Asia are prepared to leave a mark on history with a passion for social responsibility and applying learned skills and techniques for the benefit of Central Asia and beyond.



Student-led IT club and Student Body Association at UCA Khorog Campus, in collaboration with Echo Tajikistan, organised a competition "Music Lives Here". Picture shows a UCA student performing a song.

In Memoriam

DINARA MUSABEKOVA



It is with deep sorrow that we announce the tragic loss of Dinara Musabekova, Director of the Civil Society Initiative of the Graduate School of Development. The UCA community has lost one of its brightest lights, and Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asian region an outstanding advocate for civil society development.

Dinara joined the University of Central Asia in 2017 as the founding Director of the Civil Society Initiative (CSI). With her dynamic leadership, she achieved remarkable results in a short period of time. In 2018, CSI led the Kyrgyz Republic's effort to join the Open Government Partnership, a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote open government and empower citizens. At the conference in October of 2018, during the inauguration of the Government's action plan, the Prime Minister presented Dinara a certificate of recognition for her contribution in advancing open government. In 2021, CSI was awarded significant multi-year funding for a project on "Advancing Gender Equality through Civil Society" setting a new phase of development.

Prior to joining UCA, Dinara had over 10 years of experience working with policy makers, civil society organizations and the research community. Her remarkable passion, intellect, and managerial skills will always remain an inspiring legacy at UCA.

UCA Staff Attend First Aid Training

To promote a healthy and safe working environment, staff members across various locations of UCA attended First Aid training.

Guest medical trainers were invited from the Red Crescent Centre in Bishkek, the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat in Khorog, and the Aga Khan Diagnostic Centre in Naryn, to demonstrate to the staff knowledge and skills needed to effectively assess and react to situations of injuries, natural hazards, and other emergencies.



Staff from the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat demonstrating how to check the pulse rate.

Student Life in Pictures



Class of 2025 celebrated Halfway to Graduation in Khorog.







UCA's student-led Model United Nations Club organised training sessions for students from the Aga Khan Lyceum School in Khorog. The participants were familiarized with the structure of the United Nations and its mission and objectives. Students also learned how to conduct research and draft position papers for MUN conference.






Students from UCA Khorog Campus and American Space competed in a Debate Competition organised by the student-led UCA Debate Club. Participants presented compelling arguments on: Should parents educate children about stressful situations in life including divorce, death or bankruptcy?

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