

## Graduates Laud Entrepreneurship Training by SPCE



Mirza Ali, owner of Karakorum Expeditions in Pakistan, conveying his experience of attending the entrepreneurship training at SPCE. Nurbek Nisharapov, head of SPCE in Kyrgyzstan is on the right.

Forty Five graduates successfully completed the Executive Entrepreneurship Training provided by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE). The participants came from Kyrgyzstan (18), Tajikistan (20), Afghanistan (4), and Pakistan (3), and were primarily from the Tourism and IT sectors. Accelerate Prosperity in South and Central Asia was a co-partner, with funding provided by the European Union (EU).

Guests at the Graduation Ceremony which

was held in Bishkek on November 30, included the Chairman of UCA's Board of Trustees, Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, the Head of Primary Vocational Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, Ms Kamila Isataeva, representing the European Union, Ms Gulnara Mamyrova, representatives from Accelerate Prosperity in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and AKDN agencies and other international partners who joined online and in-person.

Congratulating the graduates, Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha noted that "While on the one hand SPCE has adopted business-plan training to marginalized communities in the mountainous regions of Central Asia, it is encouraging to see that from 2021 it has also launched courses to upgrade the skills of executives and owners of companies already providing tourism and information technology services."

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## UCA and Naryn State University Extend Cooperation



Naryn State University (NSU) and the University of Central Asia (UCA) have had a long-standing relationship and collaboration on many joint projects. At a recent meeting this cooperation was further extended into areas of agriculture and energy by Dr Maxim Khomyakov, Dean of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), and Dr Ermek Baibagyshev, Rector of NSU.

Within the framework of UCA's Mountain Universities Partnership programme and SAS outreach programmes, both Universities have come together on several occasions enhancing educational and training opportunities for NSU faculty and students.

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Dr Khomyakov (left) and Dr Baibagyshev discuss expanding academic cooperation.

## SMART Objectives for Performance Appraisals



Sahib Karim Khan conducting interactive training for UCA senior management in Bishkek.

A training program for UCA staff was conducted recently in Bishkek and Naryn in Kyrgyzstan, and Dushanbe and Khorog in Tajikistan. It was designed to provide supervisors with the confidence and skills needed to set SMART goals with their team members, develop more effective ways of evaluating performance on an ongoing basis as well as year-end appraisals. SMART is the acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

The sessions were facilitated by an experienced trainer, Sahib Karim Khan, who has postgraduate qualifications from Pakistan,

Ireland, and the UK. He is a consultant, author, and Six Sigma professional trainer, who specializes in providing individuals with the tools and processes to perform above expectations.

UCA has made significant progress in its performance management systems in recent years, and the training was intended to build upon this experience by providing additional training in the areas outlined. Commenting on the training, the Director of HR at UCA, Jonathan Cartmell, said, "We know that the performance review process should be an important source of motivation. Everyone deserves to

know how they are doing by receiving formal feedback. We would like to create a culture at UCA where there is shared commitment to the annual objectives, and where supervisors and team members meet throughout the year to discuss progress towards completion of objectives. This training reinforces this aim, and we hope it will help supervisors to set SMART objectives and ensure that performance review meetings with their team members are positive and productive."

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### UCA and Naryn State University Cooperation

Recently, SAS Computer Science (CS) faculty provided a month-long training to NSU students on the topic of Internet of Things as part of the MoU signed between CS departments of both Universities. Last month, students from NSU also attended boot camps for the International Collegiate Programming Contest preparations at UCA.

Dr Khomyakov and Dr Baibagyshev discussed a number of areas of further cooperation including providing opportunities for NSU to avail CISCO training at UCA and conducting research projects on agriculture informatics and alternative sources of energy.

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## Graduates Laud Entrepreneurship Training by SPCE

Speaking on the occasion on behalf of the Government of Kyrgyzstan, Ms Gulnara Mamyrova stated that "We are happy to see participants from multiple countries being trained by UCA and congratulate them on successfully completing the course. Thank you to UCA's SPCE and the European Union for supporting such initiatives and regional entrepreneurs."

"During the training programme, I had the opportunity to not only gain knowledge in the field of business, but to also meet businessmen from other districts and countries to expand my network of business contacts. Learning from the experience of my colleagues from Pakistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, I acquired wider knowledge and skills for which I'm most grateful," said Aitemir Mudinov of Kyrgyzstan, echoing the sentiments of the graduates.



Gulnara Mamyrova congratulating the graduates.

## AKHP Organises 2nd International Conference on Humanities



*Abdulmamad Iloliev (standing) welcomes the Conference participants.*

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP), conducted its Second Annual International Conference "Approaches to the Humanities in Central Asia: Past, Present and Future"

on 20th November 2022. The conference was held both online and offline at UCA's Dushanbe premises and brought together well-known scholars in the field of humani-

ties from Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia. Presenters discussed new approaches, methods, and methodologies of research and teaching of humanities in the Central Asian context and beyond.

According to Dr Abdulmamad Iloliev, AKHP Director, "The Conference demonstrated that research and teaching of humanities in post-Soviet Central Asia largely shows a gradual transformation from a traditional disciplinary approach, towards a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and problem based approaches."

The Conference also highlighted the importance of collaboration between academic institutions in Central Asia, and in this regard AKHP and its network of more than seventy institutions in Tajikistan and Central Asia could play a vital bridging role.

## CSI Creates Unique Platform for Central Asian NGOs

The Civil Society Initiative (CSI) of UCA conducted a Regional Forum which was attended by individuals and organisations from three Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The purpose was to establish a platform for knowledge-sharing, peer-support, innovation, and advocacy on gender issues, and uniting women and men who work in small and medium-sized organisations that promote a wide range of development goals, including gender mainstreaming in public health and gender equality in STEM.

Back in 2021, to support women's rights, gender equality, and women-led organizations to strengthen their institutional competencies, CSI had launched an online School for the Advancement of Gender Equality (SAGE). From January to March 2022, 60 SAGE participants from two Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have been engaged in advanced gender advocacy courses.

In November 2022, CSI brought together 30 graduates of the SAGE programme from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and participants from Kazakhstan, to the Regional Forum. The SAGE Regional Forum "Gender Advocacy in Central Asia: Challenges and Opportunities, from Theory to Practice" was aimed at establishing a platform for gender equality advocates in the Central Asian region.

During the Forum, participants presented their organisation's best practices, as well as the results of the ecosystem approach they learned at SAGE to pursue strategic planning and increase their organisations' impact. The Forum was an opportunity to exchange views and practices on a wide spectrum of gender advocacy issues.

According to Aizharkyn Kozhabekova, CSI Director, "The interactive Forum allowed participants to explore their personal and institutional experiences and expertise, build bridges between participant organizations, and encourage networking among like-minded development professionals and advance gender advocacy." This sentiment

was also reinforced by Veronica Cretu, a civil society expert and SAGE trainer.

The School is planning to engage two more cohorts of participants from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 2023 and 2024. SAGE and the Regional Forum are supported by the Government of Canada, through Advancing Gender Equality through Civil Society (AGECS) under the Foundations for Health and Empowerment (F4HE) program to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, women's groups, and community leaders to advance public good, especially gender equality, improve access to health care, and improve child protection in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



*Forum participants network during the icebreaking session.*

## GSD Research Fellow to Work on Climate Model for Central Asia in Japan



Dr Erkin Isayev at the foot of a glacier in Kyrgyzstan measuring water levels

Dr Erkin Isayev, a Research Fellow at UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute, and a specialist in meteorology, agrometeorology, and climatology, has been awarded various scholarships to pursue his higher studies from the President of Kyrgyzstan, scientific scholarship of the Russian State Hydrometeorological University, and the UN World Meteorological Organisation.

Recently Dr Isayev was invited to join the Department of Meteorological Research Institute (MRI), and the Japan Meteorological Agency (Tsukuba, Japan). During the next three months, Dr Isayev will be conducting research on dynamical downscaling for Central Asia using MRI regional climate model known as Non-hydrostatic regional climate model.

Together with Japanese colleagues, he will run a satellite high-resolution (5 km) climate model over Central Asia. Currently, Central Asian meteorological and hydrological services can access climate model products with a 100 km resolution which is not detailed enough for quality analysis and preparation of adaptation activities to climate change because of the mountainous terrain of Central Asian region. High resolution climate products lead to a better representation of finer-scale physical processes, and provide details of topography, land-sea distribution, and land surface processes. The results of the research will help establish UCA as a unique resource for climate modelling in Central Asia.

## MSRI Helps Sustain Indigenous Trees in Khatlon District

UCA's Mountain Society Research Institute (MSRI) organized a Seminar and field trip in Kulob, Khatlon District of Tajikistan, to present results of the Kulob Botanical Garden (KBG) project implemented under the THRIVE GDA Tajikistan project.

The participants of the Seminar visited two nurseries established by local farmers with the support and guidance of KBG. According to the tree nursery owners, they grew more than seven hundred trees in their nurseries in 2021 and distributed them to local schools and farmers.

During the seminar, MSRI shared key findings of the project with the participants. KBG identified 17 endangered local indigenous tree species in Khatlon District due to



Participants of the MSRI Seminar at a tree nursery.

anthropogenetic pressure, including overgrazing and illegal logging. As a result, during past decades the population of these local tree species have decreased significantly. It highlighted the need for local government, international organizations, and local communities to contribute to the protection, saving, and increasing the population of the indigenous trees in the region.

THRIVE GDA Tajikistan, a five-year project funded by USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation, is aimed at improving the quality of life for people living along the Tajik-Afghan border by strengthening the foundations of more inclusive, transparent, and accountable social service delivery and utilization through local governance insti-

tutions, and promoting economic opportunities for small-hold farmers and aspiring entrepreneurs.

The Kulob Botanical Garden project aims to preserve and restore rapidly declining key food plants and their wild relatives in the natural habitat involving communities living in the Kulob zone of Khatlon district. In the past MSRI conducted several surveys and identified rare wild plants, collected seeds of key species, and established two nurseries where seeds of local endangered fruit trees have been growing. This experience has enabled MSRI to share technical knowledge of plant conservation with the local communities to sustain food production systems for the future.

### UCA Publication for free Download



#### IPPA Working Paper #75

#### The Fates of Soviet Secret Cities

Kaichao Chang, Charles Becker

Download: [https://bit.ly/ippa\\_wp75](https://bit.ly/ippa_wp75)

## Research on the Pamirs at Oxford



*Dr Aksakolov during a visit to the History of Science Museum at Oxford.*

Dr Sultonbek Aksakolov, Assistant Professor of History at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, is continuing his research at the University of Oxford as a Visiting Research Fellow. His visiting fellowship is supported by the Central Asian Faculty Development

Programme (CAFDP) and the Faculty Research and Scholarship Fund. As a part of his visiting fellowship, Dr Sultonbek will work on an article and prepare his monograph for publication. He will also conduct research at the Central Asian Collection at the Bodleian Library, the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Library, and the Aga Khan Library in London.

At the University of Oxford, he is affiliated as a Visiting Fellow with the Oxford Center for Global History of the Faculty of History, and the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre for the Study of History, Languages, and Cultures of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

As part of his research at Oxford, Dr Sultonbek presented a paper on "Soviet Orientalist Studies and Non-titular Nationalities in Central Asia: The Legacy of Pamirovedenie, at a seminar series organized by The Oxford Society for the Caucasus and Central Asia (TOSCCA).

## SPCE Strengthens Professional Skills of School Teachers

Nineteen secondary school English teachers participated in the English Teaching Mentor Program (ETM) to enhance their professional experience. The six-day training session for secondary school teachers was conducted by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) from October 31 to November 05 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The ETM training gave the participants opportunities to try new activities, and discuss new ideas for methods that work in their classrooms. After each activity there was discussion on how these activities could be used in the teaching context of each of the

participants. The sessions aimed at introducing mentors to new innovative teaching skills and strategies that can be used in their work. The training connected views on teaching and learning, to teach specific procedures and techniques that can be used in face-to-face and classroom work.

"The ETM programme demonstrated outstanding results and is the most impactful programme among all the programmes that SPCE Dushanbe currently has. The exciting thing about this programme is that it involves English teachers from various universities like Khorog State University, Khujand



*SPCE teachers review group assignments during the training session.*

## IPPA Has New Director



Dr Kanat Tilekeyev, a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Central Asia, has been appointed as the new Associate Director of the Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) of the Graduate School of Development.

A talented economist, Dr Tilekeyev has been Senior Research Fellow at UCA since 2012 with primary responsibility for research and capacity-building projects, enhancing social cohesion through community-driven development, and gender and employment in Central Asia.

Prior to joining UCA, Dr Tilekeyev worked as an economist and agricultural specialist with the Kyrgyz Agricultural Institute, and in the private sector in oil, food processing, and agricultural production.

Dr Tilekeyev holds a PhD in Transition Studies/Economics from the Center for International Development and Environmental Research, University of Gies-sen (Germany). His doctoral research defined and empirically validated the main determinants of rural poverty in Kyrgyzstan and provided recommendations for growth in agriculture.

State University, Bokhtar State University, Kulyab Universities, Russian Slavonic University, and most importantly teachers from Vahdat among Afghan refugees that appreciated UCA for this great learning experience. Initially this programme was taught by expatriates, but in the last two years it is fully taught by SPCE instructors, and highly appreciated by the US Embassy who are willing to continue funding this outstanding project," said Farrukhsho Fraidonov, Head of SPCE Tajikistan.

## SAS Faculty Receive Top International Awards

An intriguing question in developmental biology is how nature exhibits various structures, shapes, and organized patterns. Understanding the biological patterns through numerical simulation of coupled reaction-diffusion equations, Dr Ramzan Ali, Associate Professor of Mathematics at UCA, presented and secured the Best Paper Award at the International Conference on Biomedical and Bioinformatics Engineering 2022 held in Japan.

Dr Ali's paper proposes an efficient model comprising state-of-the-art spatial and temporal discretization techniques to find stable Turing-type patterns. "This research could be vitally essential considering the threat of extinction posed by climate change to thousands of species," said Dr Ali.

One of the contributors to the research paper is Attique Ahmad, UCA Alum of Class of 2022, who implemented an extended Gray-Scott model and found unique stable Turing Patterns in the diverse range for realistic geometry.

At another conference, Dr Ayman Aljarbouh, Chair of the Computer Science Department at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, received the Best Presentation Award. At the 2022 11th International Conference on Computer Technologies and Development (ICCTD), Dr



Dr Ramzan Ali

Aljarbouh presented his paper entitled "Rigorous Hybrid Computer Simulation for Better Ride Comfort and Road Holding in Full-Car Semi-Active Suspension Systems".

Dr Aljarbouh proposed a new dynamic approach for modeling with rigorous simulation and control of full-car semi-active suspension systems. The paper considers the current emphasis on developing advanced computerized systems for ride comfort and road handling. However, one of the challenging problems in the design and implementation of intelligent suspension systems is that there is currently no solution supporting the export of generic suspension models and control components for integration into embedded Electronic Control Units



Dr Aljarbouh (right) chairing an online session at ICCTD.

(ECUs). In his paper, Dr Aljarbouh introduces hybrid computer simulation combined with a sliding mode approach for control of full-car suspension dynamics such that the road holding stability and ride comfort characteristics are ensured.

## Public Lecture Design Thinking: Origins and Problems



Dr Ashrafi delivering the public lecture.

Organised within the framework of the University of Central Asia Research Cluster: Modernity in Central Asia: Identity, Society, and Environment, Dr Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences in Naryn delivered a Public Lecture on Design Thinking: Origins and Problems.

Dr Ashrafi highlighted that not only has design thinking, in its unadulterated and ordinary mode, historically preceded scientific thinking, but it has also served as a foundation of its formation.

Listen to the full lecture on UCA's [YouTube](#).

## Best Graduate Continues Her Studies in Astana



Jonbegim Mukhtor plans to use her knowledge for the development of her native region.

After graduating from UCA in 2021, Jonbegim Mukhtor, who received the "Best Graduate of the Year" award, has gained acceptance to the graduate program at Nazarbayev University's Graduate School of Public Policy in Astana, Kazakhstan.

"I decided to apply for the master's program in Public Policy because I consider it an ideal path for those who aim to address key policy and governance challenges. Having seen the hardship people face in remote mountainous communities, I always wanted to pursue a world-class education and use the knowledge for the development of my region and country as a whole", says Jonbegim. Her undergraduate degree in Global Economics at UCA greatly influenced her decision to pursue a graduate degree in Public Policy.

## Civil Servants and Journalists Graduate from SPCE



Bridgette Walker (left), Deputy Chief of US Mission in Tajikistan, presents a certificate of completion to Hasan Atoev, participant of the English for Ministries and Civil Servants program.

The School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Tajikistan celebrated the achievements and graduation of 157 students for successfully completing the English for Ministries and English for Journalists programs. The courses were held with financial support from the United States Embassy in Tajikistan.

Bridget Walker, Deputy Chief of US Mission in Tajikistan highlighted that “Learning is a life-long process, and learning a language is never complete. I encourage you to keep practicing and improving your English after this course. Your English skills will open new

doors for you in so many areas of your personal and professional lives.”

Muzaffar Jorubov, UCA’s Chief Operating Officer, congratulated the graduates, “We have complete confidence that the education you have received will be your life guide, and that SPCE will continue to develop further and expand its scope of activities.”

The main goal of these programs was to develop the learner’s fluency, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills through participation in various speaking activities.

## Swiss Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Visits Naryn Campus



Ambassador Olivier Bangerter (right) at the Creative Studio on UCA’s Naryn Campus.

## SAS Faculty and Alum Present Paper at UAE Conference



Dr Fayaz supervising Sarvinoz’s undergraduate dissertation during her senior year at UCA.

Dr Muhammad Fayaz, Computer Science faculty at UCA’s School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), presented a research paper at an International Conference on Electrical and Computing Technologies and Applications (ICECTA) in U.A.E. Entitled “A Cohesive Machine Learning-Based Model for Energy Consumption Prediction in Smart Homes”, the paper was co-authored by Sarvinoz Toshpulotova, who graduated in 2022 from SAS with a degree in Computer Science.

The research is based on Sarvinoz’s undergraduate dissertation on the issue of energy, which despite being a costly resource remains in demand, but with technological advancements can be utilized in a much more effective manner.

The paper has been accepted for publication and will soon be available at IEEE Xplore, a renowned digital library.

Olivier Bangerter, Ambassador of Switzerland to Kyrgyzstan, accompanied by Dr Barkat Fazal, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) to Kyrgyzstan, visited the Naryn Campus of UCA’s School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) on November 24.

Mr Bangerter met faculty members, discussed future collaboration, and expressed his admiration for AKDN’s activities in the region, particularly in improving the quality of life of mountain communities.

## Undergraduate Admissions Now Open at UCA

"I have one son currently pursuing Communications and Media at the Naryn Campus of the University of Central Asia and I am here to encourage my other child to follow the same path," said Dinara Niazalieva, the parent of Aibek Niazaliev, a senior student from Naryn.

Dinara along with several other parents and over 150 students from across the country visited the Naryn Campus on November 26 to learn about the undergraduate programmes and the admissions process at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, where admissions are now open: [www.ucentralasia.org/applytouca/](http://www.ucentralasia.org/applytouca/).



At the Open House, Nursultan Stanaliev, Communications and Media faculty at UCA, sharing the many international university partnerships that UCA has forged over the years.

Deadline for submitting applications for the undergraduate programmes is 15 March 2023. For questions regarding admissions, please visit: [www.ucentralasia.org/admissions-FAQs](http://www.ucentralasia.org/admissions-FAQs)

## Lycee Students Learn about UCA Admissions



About 120 students from grades 10 and 11 of the Aga Khan Lycee in Khorog attended a presentation on UCA's admissions process on December 9. Sheroz Naimov, Assistant Manager of Student Affairs at the School of Arts and Sciences shared why choosing UCA was such an attractive opportunity. The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session.

## From Norway to Naryn: Exchange Student at UCA

"I did not want a typical exchange experience, where internationals just stick to each other and do not get a chance to immerse themselves in the local culture," said Sarah Sandqvist, an exchange student from the University of South-Eastern Norway at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences. As part of the Erasmus+ Global Mobility Project, she has been accepted to study a semester in the Communications and Media department at the Naryn Campus.

"I knew it would be a different and interesting experience. My faculty in Norway also spoke highly of UCA. Initially, I was afraid of having a cultural shock as it was difficult to find information online about Kyrgyzstan, but following UCA's Instagram helped me

to learn about its research projects and student life on campuses."

Erasmus+ Global Mobility refers to the mobility of students between European higher educational institutions and non-European partner countries. Last semester, three of UCA students from the Khorog Campus studied in Norway as part of an exchange programme.

"We have huge class sizes in Norway and do not interact with faculty outside classrooms or speak much during the classes. It is a completely different learning environment here. We have small cohort sizes and the courses are interactive. I am enjoying making new friends and mentorships with my teachers."



Sarah (2nd from left) with her class mates from UCA.

Sarah shares a dorm room with one of the UCA students from Khorog, Tajikistan, "I would not have been able to make friends this quick if it was not for sharing the room with another student. My roommate took me into her friend circle, and that has really made me feel welcome."

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