



ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

CAPSTONE INTERNS 2017

Ten sophomores successfully completed their 2017 summer internships organized by U.S.-CAEF. The students gained a first-hand look at business operations in the region and reported that the experience helped them determine their majors, and prepared them for additional internships in their junior and senior years. Fellows of other cohorts, including several freshmen, also actively sought professional development opportunities to better prepare for their future careers. Read fellows' feedback on the next page.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation (U.S.-CAEF) Enterprise Student Fellowships is an undergraduate business education scholarship program for academically gifted students sponsored by the U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation (The Foundation) & administered by American Councils for International Education.

The Foundation, in partnership with the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek (AUCA) & the KIMEP University in Almaty, provides educational opportunities in business and other activities for students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan to cultivate a principled entrepreneurial environment in Central Asia that fosters the growth of free enterprise and open markets.



MEERIM MOLDALIEVA

Coca-Cola Bishkek Bottlers, Kyrgyz Republic
U.S.-CAEF Regional Internship Program

The internship with Coca-Cola Bishkek Bottlers was an opportunity to test myself in the HR and marketing spheres. It helped me realize how much I enjoy working with people, and organizing workshops and trainings. I had a brilliant supervisor - **Asel Beishekeeva**. She was very friendly and helpful, eager to answer all my questions. Moreover, I received a lot of feedback from my colleagues and senior managers as well; and now I know what I need to focus on.

During the internship, I was involved in marketing and sales data analysis, market research, HR procedures and trainings. I found some tasks challenging, especially those which required strong technical skills such as knowledge of Learning Management System, SUB, and advanced Excel program tools for processing big amounts of information. However, due to this exposure, I learned important computer skills that I would surely use in the future. In addition, I understood how soft skills are important. I did my best to be flexible and communicative with coworkers and, as a result, I became a better team player.

Upon completion of my internship, I realized that I need to have some experience in the finance field as well. Only then I can choose the right specialization for me and get a clearer idea about my career path. I believe that the internship program is very useful because fellows acquire real world experience in desired fields, grow professionally and get ahead of other students. I highly enjoyed my internship at Coca-Cola.



SOMON MAVLONAZAROV

Auchan, franchise of Schiever, Dushanbe, Tajikistan
U.S.-CAEF Regional Internship Program

Schiever is a big international organization, which has hypermarkets and retail stores all over the world. In 2016, despite many bureaucratic challenges, it opened an Auchan franchise in Dushanbe. Now Auchan has a great influence on the market of the country.

My internship has exceeded my expectations. I thought that I would get some simple tasks and stay quietly at a desk. On the contrary, I was actively involved in the store's procedures. I felt as if I had been "in the eye of a tornado": although I was in the center of the main actions, I remained in a safe zone because of the strong support I received from my colleagues, especially, from **Umedjon Kurbonali**, a U.S.-CAEF alumnus. My other coworkers helped me a lot with translation of documents from French-- the headquarters of the company is in France, so all major documentation is in French. Due to my limited knowledge of accounting (I am a Finance major), I had some difficulties. But thanks to a strong support and direction from my supervisor, Fabienne, I managed to cope with all tasks. In addition, my skills in MS Excels have improved significantly. Prior to the internship I had underestimated the importance of computer skills. Now I know that all accounting operations are done through this convenient program.

Perhaps, the most useful experience for me was working with people from culturally diverse backgrounds -- it is unforgettable. I was impressed how, despite the language barrier, the store's management was able to establish smooth workflow. One of my duties was to make sure the staff understood and followed all instructions and store regulations properly. While interacting with the staff, I experienced many challenges. However, I found solutions to all problems through cooperation and compromise.

The internship helped me understand that I need to improve my knowledge base of the accounting science, and focus more on my university studies. Also, I need to be more open to new contacts because networking is a strong tool for achieving success. Most importantly, I have developed a strong interest in the retail business, and would like to connect my career with this field which I find exciting and rewarding, although stressful at times. I think retail has a big potential in Tajikistan, because historically trade has been a major part of the country's culture.



KASIY MAMBETKUL KYZY

German Development Cooperation (GIZ), Bishkek
U.S.-CAEF Regional Internship Program

Before the internship, I had been interested in finance only. My involvement in the Strengthening of Livelihoods through Climate Change Adaptation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Project opened new career opportunities for me and provided valuable insights into project management. It helped me understand what additional knowledge and skills in management, finance and HR I need to acquire should I decide to pursue a career in this field in the future.

During the internship, the most enjoyable experience for me was my involvement in tender opening procedures, which helped me learn to process important financial documents, work on contracts and reports, and maintain the internal database.

Another valuable aspect of the internship was communication with project team members. Conversations with my coworkers, especially with my supervisor **Bermet Nurbekova**, a U.S.-CAEF alumna, left very bright memories about my internship, because while talking to my colleagues I learned a lot about their professional background and received helpful advice from them.

I strongly recommend this organization for future interns interested in international development. Fellows can learn about various development projects carried out by the organization in our country. In addition, interns can find working with people from different countries very enriching.



OSIYA OLIMNAZAR

Crowe Horwath
Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Inspired by my summer internship experience through U.S.-CAEF with Deloitte in Dushanbe last year, I did another internship, at Crowe Horwath, this summer. Crowe Horwath is a public accounting, consulting, and technology firm with offices around the world. I am thankful to Zarrina Muhiddinova, U.S.-CAEF coordinator in Tajikistan, who helped me reach out to the managers of the company and put in a word for me.

The internship experience was very pleasant and effective. I learned about different techniques, procedures and daily operations that auditors perform at Crowe Horwath. I was involved in the audit of Caritas Germany, a non-profit organization, and to my surprise, I was given the same amount of work as auditors. Moreover, my supervisor allowed me to check Caritas' financial statements and transactions independently and make my own calculations and conclusions. I was trusted and privileged to contact the Chief Financial Accountant of Caritas directly if I found any issues within the financial statements and ask for explanations.

Overall, this was a very inspiring experience for me. I truly enjoyed the warm office atmosphere, and made good friends with whom I stay in touch. Moreover, Rahimbek Akramov, director of the firm, said that he would be ready to offer a full-time position to me any time.



SEVARA TADZHIBAEVA

Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Although I was only a rising sophomore, after passing a highly competitive selection process, I was chosen to intern the whole summer at the U.S. Embassy together with juniors and seniors from different universities.

During my internship, I was exposed to many different projects, met with outstanding diplomats, government people and, of course, with Madam Ambassador Sheila Gwaltney. I attended several economic briefings at trainings within the embassy, which shaped my views on the economic situation.... I've improved my management skills which go along with multitasking skills. I have certainly learned a lot about budgeting and financial analysis, and realized that Excel is an essential part of working with budgets and finance.

I was able to show my understanding of other cultures and values, which helped me earn respect of my colleagues, and to demonstrate my resourcefulness, creativity and excellent communication skills that helped me successfully complete all tasks. At the end of my internship, I was offered the position of a part-time assistant. I accepted this offer, and now I am assisting the embassy staff, and developing new skills. I truly believe that all the network, knowledge and skills I have developed here will contribute to my future career goals.



SEZIM ZHENISHBEKOVA

SEZIM (FAR LEFT) AT BURGER HOUSE

Highland Capital & Burger House
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Over the summer, I had a chance to intern at two companies: Highland Capital and Burger House located in the Business Premium Center in Kyrgyzstan.

Highland Capital is a business consulting firm that helps companies with their strategy, financial management and capital allocation. Throughout three months, I interacted with experts in the sphere of audit, consulting and investment banking.

Overall, the experience proved to be both fun and rewarding. I realized that all the analytical, research and presentation skills that I have learned at the AUCA Case Club were relevant and useful when working on practical, real-world assignments. The biggest takeaway from this internship was sharpening my analytical and business understanding skills. Moreover, working in the office environment helped me develop a better idea of business ethics, and a sense of how to play the game of office politics.

Burger House is a fast-food restaurant, which offers high quality burgers made of premium ingredients in three locations in Bishkek. During the whole summer, I worked in the head office with the marketing team, the CEO, and managers. I was involved in research analysis of our competitors, KPI (Key Performance Indicators), comparing each month's expenses and identifying seasonal/constant product prices, doing video reviews to check transparency of fair work. In addition, I helped create loyalty programs, organize events for customers, and find new ways of increasing brand-awareness through different marketing channels.

Overall, the experience I gained here was brilliant, as I was able to see how business sustains, and how even small factors can damage your business. Moreover, I realized how objectives and customer satisfaction matter in having a sustainable advantage over competitors. Currently, I am taking Intro to Marketing, where I would like to witness the relevance of theoretical knowledge with practice, to make the picture clearer.

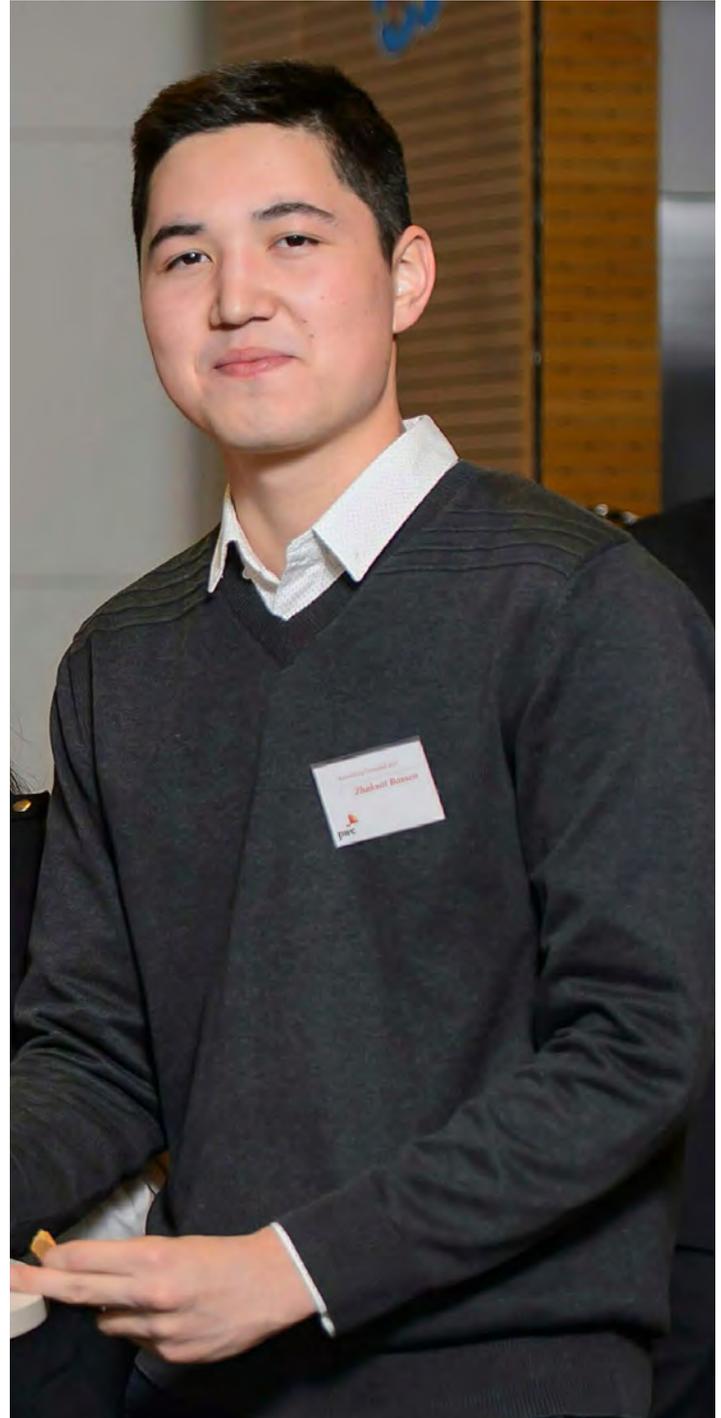


NAZIRA KHOLTURAEVA

Eskhata Bank
Kanibadam, Tajikistan

This summer, I did my first internship in the accounting department of Eskhata Bank in Kanibadam, my hometown. During my time with the company, I learned to open bank accounts, deal with wire transfers and deposits, and prepare write-offs and orders.

Although the internship was only one month in duration, I gained important professional experience- I learned to work with customers, developed my teamwork and time management skills, and expanded my network. Most importantly, it encouraged me to gain more experience. Therefore, I decided to work part-time as assistant in the KIMEP President's Office. Now I am learning about the work of the different departments of the university, and have already met many students and professors.



ZHAKSAT BASSEN

PwC
Almaty, Kazakhstan

In the spring 2017 semester, I took part in the Accounting Olympiad organized by PwC, and shortly after, I received an offer for a one-month internship in the audit and assurance department of the company.

The internship was a great opportunity for me to delve into the firm's operations. I assisted my coworkers in preparing audit reports, and performed some accounting and audit procedures using special software programs. At the end of the month, I was offered a long-term internship with PwC which starts in January 2018.



DASTAN AKHTAYEV

GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals
Almaty, Kazakhstan

My one-year internship with GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals (GSK), a leading pharmaceutical company, was a challenging experience because I was a full-time student and a full-time employee at the same time. However, thanks to the support from the U.S.-CAEF alumni, and the knowledge I gained at KIMEP, I was able to overcome all barriers.

As a marketing assistant at GSK, I worked together with the brand managers to achieve customer satisfaction. I was involved in launching new medicine on the market, engaged in multichannel communication with health care professionals, administered the CRM (customer relationship management) software, and developed promotional plans for the upcoming year. Knowing that every product that we promoted could affect someone's health put a lot of pressure on me, and made me feel responsible for the information I provided. Working for this socially responsible company, which cares about its customers, was a great pleasure.



JAHONGIR RAHIMOV

IMON International
Zafarabod & Khujand, Tajikistan

My summer internship with IMON International, a leading micro deposit organization (MDO) in Tajikistan, was extremely useful because it was my first professional experience directly related to my Finance major.

I started my internship at the branch in the Sugd region where I learned a great deal from financial experts about credit and debit. Working in the operational department helped me better understand the role and functions of branch offices in the overall performance of the MDO.

After completing my "studies" in Zafarabad, I was transferred to Khujand where I spent another two weeks working directly with clients and assisting my supervisor with resolving problem loans.

During the last week of my internship, I participated in the risk-management process, which is even more relevant to my Finance major. This experience allowed me to utilize the knowledge gained at KIMEP. In addition, I learned about the specifics of risk allocation at IMON International.

I am very satisfied with my internship, as I learned a lot from my supervisors and met many professionals through my experience with IMON International.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



HELPING MOTHERS GAIN JOB SKILLS

ZHIBEK (4TH FROM LEFT) WITH PROUD PARTICIPANTS

BY ZHIBEK KAMALBEK KYZY

During this summer, U.S.-CAEF fellows **Zhibek Kamalbek kyzy**, **Sezim Zhenishbekova** and **Atai Amanatov** organized a social project called "TechMothers". There were 35 participants from Naryn and Jalal-Abad. The aim of the project was to teach mothers computer skills. In the century of technology, mothers in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan are becoming less demanded in the job market. This is due to their lack of computer literacy. Most of them do not have time, conditions or resources to get computer education. However, employers require computer literacy from their employees. "TechMothers" is a project that aims to empower mothers. The main idea is to have computer courses for women aged between 25-55 years old. The volunteer trainers held classes in Naryn and Jalal-Abad, from July 24 to August 11, 2017. Participants learned basic computer skills - how to turn on and turn off the machine, open applications, use Microsoft Word, Excel and Power Point programs, and Internet searching tools and social media. In addition, participants created Gmail and Facebook accounts. At the end of the courses, women received certificates of completion and basic computer skills.

The idea of the project came to me when I was with my own mom, who is a pharmacist and cannot use computer at all. With the help of a computer software program, her job would become easier. However, she had no opportunity to learn it by herself because of lack of time, and resources.

Currently, we have 35 women alumni, they are from different backgrounds; teachers, doctors, workers of government services and housewives. In Naryn, our alumni organized the Women's Association, where they meet each month and share their thoughts, knowledge and experiences. It is such a nice feeling to see them actively using social media and Gmail. In the future, there will be follow-up trainings with these mothers, where we will teach them to more advanced techniques and programs.



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Fellows also recognize the need to bring a global perspective to the economy of the Central Asian region. Therefore, they use every opportunity to enrich their knowledge and experience through participation in various international events and programs.



A SEMESTER AT THE SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

KAMILA (2ND FROM RIGHT) WITH EXCHANGE STUDENTS

BY KAMILA BEKBAGANBETOVA



Thanks to the U.S.-CAEF program, I am currently studying at the Singapore Management University. This is a great opportunity full of new life lessons and experiences. Even though the adaptation period was much more difficult than I had expected, I feel that the program has already benefited me in so many ways. The studies here are much more challenging than at KIMEP, and it was so unusual to spend my first week of classes in the library. Now I spend 4-5 hours daily studying in the library. But, I love how hard it is to study here, and I am ready to embrace all other challenges that this semester will bring.

During the first week in Singapore, I applied to the Habitat for Humanity organization. I was compelled by the opportunity to be part of this amazing team of hard-working, kind

and passionate people. Habitat for Humanity builds, rehabilitates and repairs simple, decent, affordable homes in sustainable communities with support from homeowner families, volunteers, donors and partner organizations. After the application process and interview, I became a member and finished my first project last week. With my teammates, we worked on the improvement of living conditions of disabled and elderly people who live alone and are unable to work. This made me see the other side of this glorious city and made me realize that it doesn't matter whether it is a first or third-world country, there is always someone who needs your help and support. I am planning to participate in all projects of the organization this semester, and hope to bring this valuable experience back home.



BUILDING A STRONGER REGION IN CENTRAL ASIA THROUGH CAYN

BY SHAHLO JONMAMADOVA (CENTER)



In July 2017, I was selected to participate in the Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN) seminar organized by OSCE in Astana, Kazakhstan. About 25 participants were selected out of 340 applicants from all Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan and Mongolia.

CAYN is a network of bright individuals who share the same goals and aspirations. The main aim of the seminar is to improve critical thinking skills and to give students an opportunity to share ideas on existing threats to security in our region. CAYN consists of seminars and formal and informal activities. We had an opportunity to meet regional leaders and opinion makers like Erlan Karin, a prominent political scientist in Kazakhstan, Sanzhar Abdykhalik, an entrepreneur from Almaty, and Dana Akilbekova, senior research scientist at Nazarbayev University. Moreover, we had a chance to experience EXPO 2017. Additionally, I was very delighted to meet other U.S.-CAEF fellows at CAYN.

One of the most interesting parts of CAYN was a 30-hour film project where teams using the assigned genre, a prop and a line dialogue need to create a 7-minute short film. I was very impressed by all the films created by students who had never had experience in film making.

Every year CAYN invites one participant from each country to participate in a study tour at OSCE headquarters in Vienna, Austria. In August 2017, I was selected as a representative of my country and had an opportunity to learn more about the structure and activities of OSCE and the General Secretariat. I also had an opportunity to meet with Saeeda Iskandarova, a representative from Tajikistan, and discuss current security threats in our region.

CAYN gave me some detailed insights into how OSCE works and how we, young individuals, can build peace and stability in our region.



IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL AWARENESS

BY SHAISLAM SHABIEV



From July 30 to August 26, I participated in the Service Civil International program in Germany. It is a volunteer organization designated to promote peace by organizing international projects. The topic of my summer school was "National Socialism in Germany during WW2; Holocaust; Economic Development of Germany after WW2." My summer school was held in Berlin and in Hamburg (Buchholz). Fifteen participants from Mexico, Turkey, Czech Republic and Kyrgyzstan took part in the event.

Through this program, I learned the importance of knowing history. After visiting the Neuengamme Concentration camp and watching some documentaries about the survivors of the WW II, I could feel the pain of people during that time. I experienced a tremendous change in my perception of the world, and developed a sense of empathic concern for victims of violence thanks to this program.

ONE STEP AT A TIME TOWARDS SUCCESS

BY ISLAMBEK ASHYRALIEV



Different people can offer different definitions of 'success'. As for me, I count every step that I take to be successful as my success story.

On September 17, AIESEC, an international student organization, held a leadership development day at KIMEP University. This was an unforgettable and life changing experience. As a participant of this event, I had a chance to talk with representatives of such famous companies as Mars, Microsoft and BCG. The speakers' presentations motivated me to do great things to make my country better. I also gained some knowledge about "crowd funding", and presented my project about the rights of women who became victims of domestic violence and needed temporary accommodations.

I was highly impressed by the AIESEC volunteers and the great job they had done! The conference encouraged me to pursue my goals and achieve success. So I decided to join AIESEC.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



THE BEST START UP OF THE YEAR

Nargiza Chaikozova, class of 2011, and her husband Erulan Chekirov founded a consulting company Chekiroff Consult in Moscow, Russia in 2016. Anisa Atalova, President of the U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association, interviewed Nargiza about her new venture and plans for the company's future.

What are the achievements of the company? How many people do you currently employ?

Chekiroff Consult provides accounting services to more than 30 companies in Moscow, including some businesses created by Kyrgyz entrepreneurs in Russia. At the moment, the company employs 2 people.

What challenges did you face as an entrepreneur in one of the most competitive cities in the world? What are the biggest rewards of being an entrepreneur?

It was, indeed, difficult to open a business in Moscow. However, thanks to our perseverance and support from relatives, it became possible. To conduct business in Moscow is not so difficult, if you follow the law. One of the advantages is that in Moscow you can create a large customer base.

The highest award for me as an entrepreneur is when what you do benefits people. My task is to help conduct business, since accounting is an intangible part of any business. In Moscow, our company is part of the International Association of Entrepreneurs, which was organized by our compatriots. Every year, the "Delovaya Auditoria" magazine recognizes the contributions of the members to the business environment and community. In 2016, our company was named The Best Startup of the Year.

In what way do you think the U.S.-CAEF program contributed to your career success?

I had a chance to study at one of the best universities in Central Asia thanks to U.S.-CAEF which made it possible for me to work in an international company. During my study at the university, U.S.-CAEF conducted many events related to business, which influenced my decision to start my own business.

What is your advice for students who are at the beginning of their professional careers?

The main thing is not to be afraid of your desires and to believe in yourself. Out of fear, very often we do not do what we want to. The idea about opening a consulting company came to me in 2013, but I put it on hold because of my fear of failure. It is important to be a professional in your field, and for this you need to get a good education and develop your skills. Do not miss opportunities to practice your skills at work, or volunteer.

What are your plans for the future?

Currently, we are working on a mobile application to simplify communication between accountants and businessmen which will assure more accuracy, and speed up our services. In such large cities like Moscow, the most valuable thing is time. With the help of this mobile application, clients can set tasks without wasting time on phone calls. We plan on presenting our application in December 2017. In the future, we see our company with several branches in Russia and Kyrgyzstan, which would employ over 100 people.



BRINGING EFFICIENCY TO MILAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

BY ULUKBEK ABDUBALIEV, CLASS OF 2015 (RIGHT)



In May, together with my two teammates from the Polytechnic University of Milan I won the SmartCivis contest among Italian universities organized by The Common Good, a US-based non-profit public advocacy organization. We will be traveling to Washington, DC on November 17 to receive our award.

The aim of our project called "MI-Care" aims at improving quality of life in Milan through utilizing cloud-computing technology in the Milan healthcare system. The idea is to introduce chip-embedded healthcare cards for the Milanese citizens that will replace standard paper IDs. The cards store all main health information of patients such as disease history, x-rays, prescriptions, and other data that can be accessed easily by both a patient and a doctor. I am proud that this project was recognized by the World Economic Forum representatives, Hewlett-Packard technical directors, and the Milan municipality for bringing efficiency to the local healthcare system and affecting the quality and speed of delivering healthcare services to more than 800,000 citizens. Currently, this project is being presented on a larger scale, which requires development of more detailed Terms of Reference and fundraising activities. I am glad that this initiative is becoming part of the global healthcare development.

ULUKBEK ABDUBALIEV (LEFT)





AT THE FOREFRONT OF DIGITIZATION

AUCA fellows **Uulzhan Aitnazarova** and **Meerim Zhanybek kyzy** interviewed **Kalys Zhumakadyr uulu**, class of 2014, to learn about his recent career advancement. After one year with Beeline, a leading telecommunications company in Bishkek, Kalys was promoted to Head of Digital Products and relocated to Almaty to join VEON Group, a hub that unites Beeline brands in the countries of Eurasia. By launching innovative products, Kalys has an opportunity not only to be part of the global digital trends, but also to work and learn from the leading world experts.

What are the most valuable skills you gained while at AUCA that helped you in your career?

Certainly, communication and presentation skills, and general business theory that I acquired at AUCA helped me a great deal. However, the most impactful factor was the university environment, which makes students perform at their best. For example, the class sizes were small which allowed us to engage in stimulating discussions. Such activities help students become open-minded, and develop important interpersonal and critical thinking skills that can serve them well in any workplace.

The harsh truth of the reality is that fresh graduates have a difficult time landing a good job, so did I. Upon graduation, you must work hard to find the right match for your career. Luckily, I've found it. I chose Beeline because it is one of the few companies that sets forth ambitious goals. I was particularly impressed by its strategy to transform the company into a digital organization. After consulting with my mentor, who had joined Beeline earlier, I decided to try this path and has never regretted since. Moreover, I find the atmosphere at Beeline inspiring, similar to the environment I used to enjoy at AUCA.

Could you tell us about your work with VEON?

At VEON Digital Hub Eurasia, I am involved in similar tasks but on a larger scale. My VEON team strives to accelerate the digital transformation of the operating companies across seven markets. We've set an ambitious goal to transform from telecommunications into the world class digital organization. So, we are exploring new markets by launching new products (e-commerce, messengers, big data, etc.). On top of that, we are digitalizing our traditional business processes; for example, automating delivery and SIM-card logistics. We are entering the new era of global digitization which I find very exciting.

What is your recipe for success?

Do your best and keep working! Prior to Beeline, I had tried myself in different spheres, and, finally, I found what I had been looking for. I realized that if you don't see the light at the end of the tunnel, keep walking forward, get up if you fall down, don't get stuck in one place, and just continue walking. This is the way I found my path, by trial and error. Along the way, I understood 3 most important things that can bring success at any workplace:

- To manage your time effectively: deliver all given tasks by deadlines;
- To manage your group's time effectively: delegate tasks and create synergistic teams;
- To manage your organization's time effectively: create favorable conditions and a solid timeline to keep all employees on schedule.

What role did U.S.-CAEF play in your life?

There are three key reasons why U.S.-CAEF is a life-changing program - support, belief and purpose. First, the program provides financial and emotional support. Without U.S.-CAEF, I wouldn't have been able to study at AUCA. U.S.-CAEF became my family, when I moved to a new city, away from my family and close friends. Second, U.S.-CAEF believed in me, and invested in my future. This was important, because when someone believes in you, you also start believing in yourself. Finally, I realized that my personal mission matches the mission of the program. Having the same goals is important for increasing your chances of success.

CAPSTONE INTERNS SHARE THEIR U.S. EXPERIENCES

The U.S. International Capstone Internship program is an opportunity for recent U.S.-CAEF graduates to immerse themselves in the global business network. The program is specifically designed to help these individuals explore career options, gain valuable skills and make professional contacts. **Six select interns are currently participating in The Washington Center's postgraduate professional development program in Washington, D.C.** The quotes below reflect the interns' first impressions and thoughts about their Capstone experience.



SHAHNOZ JONMAMADOVA

1776 Business Incubator

During the first day at 1776, my supervisor asked me about my plans after the internship, so that we can work more on the skills needed for that particular job.... One of my first tasks was to conduct research and evaluate the tax climate for all states and cities in the US. In addition, I reviewed international tax systems in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan and compared them. The material will be used by 1776 to explore new expansion opportunities for the company. Furthermore, I helped develop a resource plan for the company, particularly for the taxation department—I created a detailed timeline for preparation of tax returns. In addition, I prepared the analysis and reconciliation of fixed assets, which was later used for the revenue analysis....

Besides the internship, we have Global Competencies classes at TWC every Friday. So far, the classes have been very interesting. We discuss problems that we might face at our workplaces and ways to effectively handle them. We were also assigned instructors who will have one-on-one career coaching sessions with us.

Overall, I am very satisfied with my internship and the skills I have attained so far. I am sure that by the end of the internship I will gain a rich experience, and set up clear career goals.



ZHAMILIA KLYCHEVA

Manchester Trade Ltd.

There are three interns at Manchester Trade. Our main responsibilities include research on trade and economic issues as well as administrative tasks. We are also asked to attend related events and conferences, and prepare reports on them.

Already during my first week, I visited the Nigerian Embassy, and had a chance to listen to the speech of Mr. Lopez Obrador, a leading Mexican presidential candidate. It was fascinating to learn about his political views and future plans, and realize that he might become President of Mexico. Afterwards, I had to write my first report on the event. I was glad to receive positive feedback from the Vice-President of Manchester Trade.

Since the start of the internship, I have attended eight events and learned a great deal about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA,) the U.S. foreign trade policy, and relations with African countries, Pakistan and China, listened to the U.S. Senators speeches, and attended various panel discussions. Although the topics discussed at these events are new to me, I find them quite interesting and stimulating.



ZARRINA MULLOBOEVA

Global Financial Integrity

GFI is a non-profit, Washington, DC-based research and advisory organization, which produces analyses of illicit financial flows, advises developing country governments on effective policy solutions, and promotes pragmatic transparency measures in the international financial system as a means to global development and security. Many developing countries have failed to grow past the point where foreign aid is no longer necessary because more funds are being transferred out of the country illegally. These funds are usually proceeds from crime, corruption and tax evasion.

... when I learned that I would be preparing a weekly blog for their website, I was excited. The topic of illicit financial flows is very complex which makes it interesting to research and hard to curtail. Currently, I'm researching challenges of the Eastern European countries as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania with combating illicit financial flows and how this impacts their development. Another part of my job is attending events organized by other think-tanks in DC on related topics. For example, I attended a panel discussion organized by Brookings Institution and IFC on new approaches to combating corruption. It was exciting to meet Madame Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Ms. Ngozi, former Finance Minister of Nigeria, as I had seen them only on TV before.



SAMATBEK OSMONOV

STEMconnector

The greatest passions of my life are business and information technologies. Luckily, my internship company works in the intersection of these two spheres. STEMconnector is a consortium of companies, nonprofit associations, government entities and universities concerned with Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) education and the future of human capital in the USA.

At STEMconnector, I am primarily involved in the mobile application and product development. The first month of the internship was very productive. Our team of three interns started developing a new mobile application from scratch for both iOS and Android platforms. Thanks to our high performance and great teamwork, we managed to finish the first version of the app just in one month. The main purpose of the application is to provide our clients with information about STEMconnector's initiatives and events calendar.

At STEMconnector, the work environment is great. All of my colleagues are professionals in their fields. This environment helps me accelerate my professional growth. Also, I have a supportive supervisor. One interesting fact about her is that she has a Ph.D. degree in Cellular & Molecular Medicine. She is a great source of knowledge. Every day I learn something new from her. In addition, I like that she sets high-quality standards, it helps me do my work in the best way and improve my skills.



KUTTUBEK RAKHMANBERDIEV

The Collective Good

My internship supervisor is the founder and CEO of the company. During our first interview, she told me everything about their activities and asked me about my expectations as a digital marketing intern. This conversation was very valuable for me, because I had time to improve my skills and do some research to be better prepared for my internship.

Currently, I am doing research on how to help non-profit organizations to utilize social media marketing to attract donors and get a more engaged audience. Besides my work, my supervisor regularly organizes informal breakfast and lunch meetings and provides tips on career planning, which is very useful.

The TWC sessions are also quite useful for building our professional network and performing effectively in our internships. This week's session topic was dedicated to networking where I learned that 80% of career success depends on meeting right people in the right place at the right time. Last week, we had a session called "How to Manage Your Boss" which was very interesting. The session was based on a Harvard Business Review article. I learned that it is crucial for managers to know weaknesses and strengths of their bosses. In addition to the internship and TWC sessions, I have attended other professional events. One of them, Harnessing the Data Revolution to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, was organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Japan International Cooperation Agency Research Institute (JICA-RI). Recently, I took part in a lunch meeting with the employees of the World Bank organized by TWC where we learned about the WB's main activities, current projects and career opportunities for fresh graduates.



JAMSHEDI UMARZODA

1776 Venture Capital

The 1776 office is home for many startup businesses. The design of the office is very flexible-- people can choose any place to sit. When you enter the office, you will notice how people are engaged in discussions, sharing new ideas and strategies, which I find motivating and energizing. The entrepreneurs are very open here; you can approach them anytime and ask for advice or discuss different business related issues. This structure of 1776 helps me in many ways to meet smart and experienced people during my internship.

It is important to mention that one of the main differences between the U.S. and Central Asian companies is that employees here are always passionate and interested in developing you.... My coordinator always makes sure I have access to all professional development events, webinars, VC podcast, online courses and so on.... During the third week of my Internship, the DC Startup Week was held at 1776. Among the sessions that I especially enjoyed were "Knowing When You're Ready to Raise Money (and How)", "Where did My Money Go? Personal Finance for Founders", "Launching Startup Without Tech Knowledge", "Applying Intuition to Grow Your Business", and "5 Costly Errors That Destroy Startups: Lunch & Learn". Communicating with entrepreneurs gave me an extensive experience and knowledge about the business models and business environment in the U.S. market, and allowed me to widen my network.



AMBASSADORS OF CENTRAL ASIA IN THE U.S.

On October 27, the Capstone interns took part in the TWC's annual Global Festival.

The evening included a talent show featuring live music and dance performances, country information tables, and traditional meals. Twenty-seven international student groups were proud to present their countries at the event. The U.S.-CAEF team represented Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan this year, and surely their presentations were one of the brightest. A beautiful dance showed the passion and grace of the region, the information booths introduced guests to Central Asian history, crafts and delicious food added to the uniqueness of the uniqueness and splendor of the experience. The embassies of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan had a special role in this event—they provided brochures and books about the countries, traditional souvenirs and gifts for visitors, beautiful national costumes and interesting video materials.

MEET NEW ALUMNI OFFICER IN TAJIKISTAN: AZIZA AKILOVA



I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Accounting and Audit from KIMEP University in 2017. Currently, I am working as an internal auditor at Schiever Tajikistan. This is a demanding and the same time a very interesting job. Every day I discover something new which makes my job more enjoyable. It is the U.S.-CAEF program that made everything possible and opened numerous opportunities for my future.

I am so thankful to U.S.-CAEF for supporting the Central Asian youth. As an alumni officer in Tajikistan, I will do my best for the growth of the U.S.-CAEF alumni association.

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