

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 & open markets.

IN THIS ISSUE ▼

🍷 FELLOWS ABOUT U.S.-CAEF JOINT CONFERENCE

-page 1

🍷 GRADUATING CLASS 2013:

tips for Fellows, plans for future and more...

-page 4

🍷 FELLOWS' BROAD INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

-page 6

🍷 PROFESSIONAL CORNER:

Public Speaking

-page 8

🍷 FUTURE LEADERS:

Valentina Khomenko & Yerassyl Tolegazinov

-page 9

🍷 CLOSE UP:

Interview with Rebecca Gordan, AC Country Director in Kyrgyz Republic

-page 9



FIRST  
AUCA-KIMEP  
JOINT CONFERENCE

A SPECIAL JOINT EVENT: U.S.-CAEF FELLOWS MEET IN ALMATY

By Anisa Atalova

For the first time in the history of the U.S.-CAEF program, a joint KIMEP-AUCA event, initiated by U.S.-CAEF fellows, was held at KIMEP University in Almaty on March 4-5. Around 90 U.S.-CAEF fellows from both KIMEP and AUCA, the Board of Directors, representatives of American Councils and program alumni gathered together to get to know each other better, share their knowledge and experience, and strengthen the spirit of the U.S.-CAEF family. The two days of the conference were not only very productive, but they were a lot of fun. These two days included guest speakers, business plans introduced by fellows, team-building activities, leadership seminars, alumni speakers, a talent show, and inspiring walks with KIMEP fellows around Almaty.

On the evening of March 3, AUCA fellows arrived and enjoyed a very warm welcome dinner hosted by the KIMEP fellows. Monday, March 4, began with welcoming remarks by U.S.-CAEF Board Members, Margaret Grieve and Mary Ginsberg, American Councils Representative Terrence Graham, and Associate Vice-President of Advancement at KIMEP University, Ronald Voogdt. Later, Keynote Speaker, Michael Trueblood, Director of the Economic Development Office of USAID, spoke about the "Economic and Business Situation/Climate in Central Asia." It was followed by team-building activities coupled with ice-breakers led by U.S.-CAEF fellows. Another part of the day was devoted to the topic of leadership, which was opened by Tristram Perry, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Leadership Seminar. There was also a Leadership Panel in which directors and general managers of leading companies in Kazakhstan gave inspirational leadership lessons based on their own life experiences. The day closed with a dinner and conversation-filled stroll around Almaty.

The second day of the conference was particularly active and diverse. There were inspirational speeches by directors of leading companies in Central Asia, including BeSmart, The Farm Investment Company, on how to start your own business in the market conditions of Central Asia. There were also business start-up activities among teams made up of both KIMEP and AUCA fellows. Business plans were presented to the jury, who judged them based on creativity, credibility and real-world applicability. The teams with the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ANISA ATALOVA

Anisa Atalova is a freshman studying business administration at AUCA. In addition to her studies at AUCA, she loves reading the classics, studying chemistry and participating in debates.

best and the most creative business projects won prizes such as books about business start-ups. Furthermore, U.S.-CAEF alumni attended the conference, shared their experiences, and gave useful tips on how to survive in the post-graduation arena. The day closed with an impressive talent show that showcased Central Asian national dances, songs, and games from all the fellows.

Prior to departure on March 6, AUCA fellows and some KIMEP fellows were able to visit the BeSmart Company's office, where the director and co-founder Sultan Seitbekov gave a tour around the company, allowing everyone to ask questions about how the company functions.

All things considered, it was an amazing event, where U.S.-CAEF fellows were able not only to get to know fellows from another university but to become closer to their peers from the same university. The knowledge and experience gained were surely beneficial for everyone involved. Therefore, I want to thank not only U.S.-CAEF fellows who initiated this event, but also the U.S.-CAEF Board of Directors, American Councils representatives, and KIMEP University for a very warm welcome.

## FAMILY COMING TOGETHER: CAMARADERIE AT THE CONFERENCE

By Makhabat Tashbaltaeva

After spending a long time in Almaty traffic, the Kyrgyzstan delegation finally arrived at the KIMEP restaurant. U.S.-CAEF Kazakhstan and guests from the Board of Directors greeted them warmly and the fatigue of traveling quickly disappeared. The dinner was an opportunity for the U.S.-CAEF family to strengthen their bonds. Every member of the family had to introduce themselves. It was very exciting to learn about each other. Fellows were smiling and laughing, and everyone was happy.

The KIMEP fellows ensured that the AUCA fellows weren't bored. Groups visited the Almaty shopping mall, the Old White house, the main square, Arbat, the amazing Almaty metro and many, many other interesting places. Since it was forbidden to go outside late at night, U.S.-CAEF fellows enjoyed nights of songs with the main singer Malika Pulotova, nights of games with Chynara Erkulova, and an amazing talent show night.

The three days of the joint event were as educating as they were exciting. This event made everyone who has any relation to U.S.-CAEF appreciate the chance to be a fellow.



KIMEP & AUCA Fellows presenting together their business project

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Makhabat Tashbaltaeva

*Tashbaltaeva Makhabat is a first-year student studying business administration. She is a member of ENACTUS AUCA and writes features and short news articles for the team at AUCA. She is also a member of the AUCA Chess Club.*

## QUOTES FROM FELLOWS ABOUT THE EVENT



Kyrgyz students performing a Kazakh dance

For **Jemal Agayeva**, a sophomore Fellow from Turkmenistan, the contest for the best business project was the most meaningful component of the program:

**“Finding the best and most unique way of making your own product with the whole team and selling it to the Board members when every single team member had different cultural background was the most fun and interactive part of this event.”**

“During this 1st KIMEP-AUCA Joint Event we, U.S.-CAEF Fellows, had an amazing opportunity to network with each other, get inspired by the speakers and our peers, and meet our U.S.-CAEF Board! As a first year student, I had this chance to meet AUCA fellows, with whom we will keep in touch and hopefully collaborate on future business projects throughout these upcoming 3 years and even further. I believe our friendship will last and will be powerful!” commented **Chynara Erkulova**, President of the U.S.-CAEF Student Association at KIMEP.



Chynara Erkulova

**Malika Pulotova**, a junior from Kazakhstan, KIMEP: “I liked the conference because it was a great opportunity to know U.S.-CAEF Fellows from AUCA personally. That was a great event in terms of networking, sharing knowledge and experience. The sessions by top managers were very useful and enriched my business knowledge. Thanks a lot to the U.S.-CAEF representatives and Board members for organizing such an amazing event. I am really looking forward for attending Joint Event again.”



Malika Pulotova

**Azhar Akimbaeva**, a senior Fellow from Kyrgyzstan, AUCA: “Definitely U.S.-CAEF AUCA-KIMEP joint event was one of the biggest, most interesting and impressive events of our U.S.-CAEF entire life. During the conference we got a big dose of motivation to move towards success, met interesting people who shared their experiences, strengthened the relationship among fellows and spent our spring break usefully. Thanks to this conference, I have realized that there are a lot of opportunities to develop the whole Central Asian region together with students from different countries. For sure I will do my best in order to achieve big results, encourage other students to stay and develop CA region so that we could do it together! I want to thank all of the organizers who devoted to this event their time and effort and, of course, U.S.-CAEF for giving us amazing opportunities! I am really lucky, happy and proud to be a U.S.-CAEF Fellow!”



Azhar Akimbaeva



Last dance at the Talent Show



## REFLECTIONS of KIMEP SENIORS

by Dinara Atantayeva, Bostan Seyipova, Artur Semeyutin



From left to right: Artur Semeyutin, Kristina Fateyeva & Yuliya Baliyeva

### WHAT IS KIMEP FOR ME?

**Aylar Berdiyeva:** Studying at KIMEP was a great pleasure for me. Besides all of the knowledge I gained, it also gave me the opportunity to socialize and meet amazing people whom I call friends now.

**Krisitna Fateyeva:** KIMEP is a great place for me to try myself and push my limits. KIMEP gives a lot of opportunities to everyone. The only important thing is to not miss them. KIMEP is a wonderful environment for studying and exploring student life at the same time.

**Yuliya Baliyeva:** KIMEP is the first step towards a better future. KIMEP is a good base for a successful person. It is a starting point for a career.

**Nilufar Matyakubova:** KIMEP is the place where I not only study but also live my life.

### WHAT WAS THE MOST FUN MOMENT DURING MY STUDIES AT KIMEP?

**Aylar Berdiyeva:** I don't even know which story to tell, there are just so many! What I can say is that my life at KIMEP was very interesting. I will always remember how my roommates and I spent evenings talking, watching movies and dancing national Tajik and Turkmen dances when we were in a good mood.

**Kristina Fateyeva:** The most interesting story that ever happened to me at KIMEP was the earthquake when approximately half of the dormitory residents slept outside. I did too. It was fun and I think these are the moments and fun stories that you never forget.

**Yuliya Baliyeva:** The most interesting story that happened to me is when I was studying in Austria on exchange program. Without KIMEP and good academic achievements I would not have had this opportunity. I would like to advise all future U.S.-CAEF fellows to study hard and to try to take advantage of all the opportunities KIMEP gives you.

**Nilufar Matyakubova:** I have a lot of fun here, but the most memorable moment is when I decided to borrow a bike from my friend to ride on campus and got into an accident with the people who were throwing an open air party on campus. All of my friends ran to me to see if I was okay. But I felt guilty for the people that I crashed into. Fortunately, nobody was hurt and they said everything was fine. However, I think it was memorable not only for me but also for all my friends since they can't help smiling when they remember this story.



Bostan Seyipova and Dinara Atantayeva

## WHAT ARE MY PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

**Aylar Berdiyeva:** My plans are to return to my home country and become a successful business lady.

**Kristina Fateyeva:** My plans are to get a job I like. I am targeting the tourism sector for now. I have several offers already and am now doing research so that I can choose the best offer.

**Yuliya Baliyeva:** Start working, open my own business in Almaty, and try to cover all Central Asian market. I also want to have a family. Be successful and enjoy my life. I might get a master's degree at a later time.

As we graduate, we might have different, exciting feelings, but what all of us certainly share is the feeling that we are the ripe apples from the green tree of our U.S.-CAEF logo! We are very happy and grateful to U.S.-CAEF for these happiest four years of our lives!



KIMEP graduating Fellows

## 12 USEFUL TIPS FROM THE GRADUATES



NILUFAR MATYAKUBOVA

🏠 Don't forget why you are here – to study – which should be the first priority. However, it makes life interesting to participate in different activities and student clubs as long as they don't interfere with your studies. Personally, in my final year in particular I participated in a number of intellectual competitions, which in my opinion, help to build confidence as well as to be recognized and respected by fellow students and find a good job.



DINARA ATANTAYEVA

🏠 Of course you should devote most of your time to studying, but do not forget about your health and always play sports. (We have excellent sports facilities on KIMEP campus). Your health is the basis of your future success.

🏠 When life gets very busy and you feel that you are not meeting your deadlines, try to stay calm and go to the library. This is the best place to concentrate on your assignments.



KRISTINA FATEYEVA

🏠 Please never, never miss a chance to try something new and be spontaneous sometimes. U.S.-CAEF and KIMEP provide the greatest opportunity you can get for your university life! Do not miss your opportunities!



AYLAR BERDIYEVA

🏠 Enjoy every little moment while you are here. Don't be afraid to make mistakes and always be positive and confident. Treasure friendships and most importantly keep in touch after graduation. Best of luck!



YULIYA BALIYEVA

🏠 My advice to future fellows is to study hard and to try to use all opportunities that KIMEP offers. Try to participate in student clubs, organizations and any kind of events and programs. Try to make your academic and social life colorful and joyful.



BOSTAN SEYIPOVA

🏠 Try to eat healthy and avoid junk food even if you have a limited amount of time. Try to find time to cook.

🏠 Think in advance about your participation in the regional internship program and try to take the required courses before the internship so that you have a good base of knowledge to complete the tasks.

🏠 Do not waste your time on social networks since time is scarce.

🏠 Try to be a perfectionist and do your best in every task even if you feel very tired. All your efforts will be rewarded, sooner or later. Remember, every difficult moment will pass but the result will remain.



ARTUR SEMEYUTIN

🏠 Read newspapers every day or look for news on the internet. Know what is happening in the world. Think how world events could influence different economic or financial indicators of Central Asia. Always analyze, try to predict. The person who knows the trend never loses.

🏠 Always, if you have the opportunity and time, try to open new horizons, visit new countries and meet new people. Do not put any geographical borders for your personal development. In other words, do not miss your chance to go on exchange programs.



KIMEP graduating Fellows

## OUR FUTURE ALUMNI: AUCA SENIORS

By Dildana Abbasova



AUCA Fellows

The summer is coming. Warm sun, ice cream, children playing in the fountains, the season of relaxation. But there are some for whom this summer will be very important in building the ladder of their future. They are the graduating Fellows beginning a new adult life, full of ups and downs. This year, U.S.-CAEF at AUCA has eight such life-beginners, students who are graduating and will soon be called 'U.S.-CAEF Alumni.' Among them are Bermet Nurbekova, Izat Osmonov, Azhara Akimbaeva, Ainura Derkembraeva, Elnura Agai kyzy, Regina Stepanova, Davlatmo Bahromova and Khurshedmo Jonmamadova.

They came to AUCA in 2009 and, now, four years later, none of them believe that time has passed so quickly. Graduation is both exciting and sad for them. They are eager to begin a new round of their life path. However, for graduates there will be no more morning rush to classes, no more crazy online-registration and paper deadlines, no more tasty lunches at Kichinet (the AUCA cafeteria) and busy silent-room during finals. Bermet, one of the graduates, says: 'I realize now how much I will miss all these fun moments and all the people of AUCA.' Without a doubt, the memories and experience that our graduates gained during these four years will be unforget-

table. It is interesting that our graduates began closely contacting each other only during their third year of school. But it was not an obstacle for our team to become very close friends, one real family, where everybody is supported and valued." Our future alumni held very active social lives during their studies, successfully combining good academic standing with extracurricular activities. Some of them were members of the Student Senate, others actively participated in university clubs, such as ENACTUS (an international non-profit organization that brings together student, academic and business leaders to make positive changes through entrepreneurial projects), and AIESEC (an international student organization) and others went abroad for summer practices. Elnura said that through her involvement in community projects she 'gained social intelligence and expanded [her] professional network, which will definitely help in adapting to real life.' Hopefully, this will be the case and our graduates will greatly contribute to the development of the entire Central Asian region.

This is easy to imagine, as the 2013 AUCA U.S.-CAEF cohort is a team of determined leaders who know exactly what they want to do in the near future. After completing their Capstone internship, Izat, Bermet and Azhar are going to continue their education to earn their master's degrees abroad. Other graduates, Elnura, Regina (another Capstone finalist) and Ainura want to realize their professional potential in practice and will begin working in local companies. There are even those who will leave our sunny Kyrgyzstan. Davlatmoxh and Khurshedmo, students who became used to Bishkek and AUCA like a second home, will go back to their motherland, Tajikistan. Hopefully, our graduating Fellows from the third cohort will achieve their goals. Surely, they will because they took advantage of every opportunity during all four years of study. They are future leaders of Central Asia. Best wishes and good luck for you, our dear future alumni!!!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dildana Abbasova

*Dildana Abbasova is a first-year student in the business administration department at AUCA. She loves nature and reading books about successful women. She participates in ENACTUS AUCA and is involved in community business projects. She believes that persistence and creativity are the keys to the reaching the top.*

## FELLOWS' BROAD INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

*Inspirations from Rome and Cologne Conferences*  
By Nursultan Abdukhalilov

I received invitation letters to participate in Model United Nations (MUN) in Rome and the World Business Dialogue (WBD) in Cologne. These events took place during spring break in March 2013. Participating in MUN was my first experience and was quite interesting because I met students who were eager to change the world and make it a better place to live. I learned more about different countries repre-

mented by the delegates. Then, I participated in WBD in Cologne, Germany. There were 300 gifted students from all over the world who were interested in finding solutions to current problems in global business. Most of the students who participated in WBD had startups and some of them truly inspired me to take action and set up my own business. I gained valuable knowledge and experience during these two events.



Nursultan Abdukhalilov

## NORWEGIAN EXPERIENCES OF AUCA FELLOWS

Yelena Vorobei and Aizharkyn Burkanova of AUCA spent their fall 2012 semester as exchange students at the University of Life Sciences in Norway. Yelena and Aizharkyn were the first AUCA students to receive scholarships to study in Norway.

## SHARING CULTURES

By Medina Abylkasymova

In fall 2012, Yelena had a valuable opportunity to participate in cross-cultural exchange. During the semester, she was actively involved in volunteer and self-development activities.

As part of adapting to a new culture in the beginning of September, Yelena organized a hiking trip for herself and a group of international students in Norway. Norwegians are very fond of doing outdoor sports, and that is why she thought that getting into the same lifestyle would be helpful in understanding the culture more easily. Indeed, it helped!

Yelena participated in the international food festival on October 16, where she had a chance to educate people about Central Asia and give them some small insight into her culture through food. It was a big international event with at least 600 people in attendance. Yelena also gave three presentations about life in Central Asia, specifically Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Yelena is originally from Kazakhstan) during international education week (IEW) on November 12-18 as part of the FLEX Alumni project.



By being a member of the International Student Union (ISU) in Norway during this semester, Yelena helped organize various cultural events, including movie nights, national games, traditional holiday celebrations, and more. She received a certificate for being an honored member of ISU in Norway.

She also organized a culinary club where students meet once every two weeks to share recipes. Each time they cooked traditional food from the home countries of other student members. Throughout the semester, Yelena also volunteered for the animal shelter, where she took care of the horses once a week (cleaning, feeding, washing, etc.).

## A DREAM COME TRUE

By Aizharkyn Burkanova

My major accomplishment for this time period has been being selected as a finalist in the competition for an exchange semester in Norway at the University of Life Sciences. This exchange semester presented me with a vast range of opportunities to improve myself and my leadership skills.

First, I served as a member of the largest international student organization in Norway, the International Students Union (ISU). During this semester I volunteered and helped organize numerous events and activities such as BBQs, movie nights, festivals and report meetings. One of my favorite events was the UKA Food Festival, where I was not only a member of a participating team but also part of the administration. Besides creating presentations for more than twenty participating teams including ours, I also volunteered to provide teams with information, helped with decorations and completed other administrative tasks. The best part about this event was the opportunity to present Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan to others. More than 500 people became acquainted with our food, culture, and traditions. At the end of the semester, I was awarded with a certificate for my outstanding participation and assistance in organizing events that help improve the "democracy of the campus."

Furthermore, I participated in various sporting activities such as hiking, horse riding, biking, skating, and dancing. One of my happiest moments was

conquering the peak of one of the highest mountains in Bergen, Ulriken. I overcame my fear of heights! As a member of the Horse Riding Club, I was responsible for taking care of horses. As a participant in the Swing Dance Club, I volunteered in organizing free dance lessons for the local community. Engaging in these activities allowed me to improve and mature as a person. I became more responsible and self-reliant.

Lastly, I joined a group of explorers in Couchsurfing and was able to explore Europe. I visited many regions of Norway and other European countries, including Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. This provided me the opportunity to observe and make a comparative study of the economic strengths of the countries on my own. It broadened my view of the countries as members of various regional and multilateral unions and strengthened the theoretical background gained from my courses (International Relations and WTO in particular). In addition, it also increased my understanding of people and their culture, while enabling me to enlarge my professional network. This semester was a dream come-true! The U.S.-CAEF program provides us with such a great range of opportunities, and I want to thank the board and all of the representatives of this program for it!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Medina  
Abylkasymova**

*Medina Abylkasymovna is a first-year Fellow studying economics at AUCA. She is learning German and loves playing chess.*



## EXPANDING MY WORLDVIEW

By Shahnoza Seidmedova



Shahnoza (in red) at Midwest Model United Nations in February, 2012 St. Louis, Missouri

My name is Shahnoza Seidmedova. I joined KIMEP University in fall 2011. I am majoring in business administration and accounting.

Traveling and formal education have always been the two most important ways for me to gain knowledge effectively. I am looking forward to traveling all around the world in the future. By traveling, I want to build a strong personality and gain lifelong knowledge.

I have been studying in Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, KS, USA since fall 2012 as a participant of the U.S. Department of State Global Undergraduate Program. I am half-way through with my second semester here already. For the duration of the time that I have lived and studied here, I have been involved in quite a lot of school organizations and activities, including the Creative Writing Club, International Club, Sustainability Committee, tennis classes, volunteering at a public library and more. I have very little spare time. One of the most important and unforgettable events of my Global UGRAD exchange year was Midwest Model United Nations. Midwest Model United Nations (MMUN) took place from

February 19-23, 2013 in St. Louis, Missouri. I was part of the Sixth Committee (Legal Committee) of the MMUN project. The conference lasted for three days. There were a lot of political terms to learn. However, it was a wonderful opportunity for me to explore myself in different areas of study. MMUN has given me a chance to learn about political life broadly defined. I was proud of myself for being a small part of such a big project. Given that I had never had any experience in the area of politics, I was very enthusiastic about the whole event. Furthermore, Dr. Wright, my Model UN instructor was quite helpful and supportive. He was available at all times when we needed him. During the MMUN project, Dr. Wright was our instructor, a "parent," and a friend.

Aside from all of the formal conferences and meetings during the MMUN project, there were a lot of interesting activities to be involved in while we stayed in St. Louis, Missouri. One of the most outstanding ones was our visit to the famous Gateway Arch that is the centerpiece of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri. It is the tallest building in the State of Missouri. The Arch is located at the St. Louis Foundation site on the west bank of Mississippi River. While exploring some of the city's sights, our group formed a lifelong friendship. We keep in touch with each other and always enjoy getting together.

I appreciate that Midwest Model United Nations widened my outlook about the immense world of politics and how countries may respond to economic, political and social changes.

## PROFESSIONAL CORNER: PUBLIC SPEAKING

By Jursunai Ismailova

When working in a team or presenting something to an audience, we have to speak in public. Some of us do it well and some of us do not, and the result strongly shapes the way people think about us. Therefore, public speaking is a source of anxiety and concern for many people. Other than the regular presentations we do in classes, there are many circumstances in which good public speaking skills can help us move our careers ahead and create unlimited opportunities. For instance, we will present our organizations at different conferences and make speeches after accepting awards. Being a successful public speaker can enhance our reputation, increase our self-confidence, and open up countless opportunities.

Fortunately, we had a training called "The Power of Word" proposed by Ainur Derkembraeva, a senior Fellow. The trainer's name is Svetlana Vladimirovna Makeeva. The training aimed to help fellows overcome fears of public speaking, learn useful speech techniques, and become confident pub-

lic speakers. The training lasted for two days, with one four-hour session per day. Over the two days we practiced some exercises including: the use of gestures, controlling the voice, speaking notes, and developing a relationship with the audience.

Svetlana gave us some useful tips. She said that when a speaker is nervous, the audience can discover it. She also stressed the importance of body language, posture and helpful exercises such as taking deep breaths, standing up straight, looking into people's eyes and smiling. Also it was recommended not to stand behind a podium during the presentation because it can create a barrier between the speaker and the audience. It is better to walk and use gestures and engage the audience in various ways.

If you, dear Fellows, can make a good speech in public, it will help you get a good job or promotion. Therefore try to speak in front of people. The better you become the more confident you will get!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jursunai Ismaila

*Jursunai Ismaila is a sophomore studying economics at AUCA. In her free time, she likes reading books, dancing, and watching movies. In the future, she would like to work in a bank.*

## CLOSE UP: INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA GORDAN

By Adel Sultanbekova

**A.S.:** Today U.S.-CAEF Fellows have an incredible opportunity to learn more about the new country director of American Councils in the Kyrgyz Republic. Rebecca, certainly you have a lot to share with the AUCA students. First, could you please describe yourself?

**R.G.:** I'm a positive person who usually tries to see the good side of things. Also, I really appreciate others' sense of humor. It's good for stress relief.

**A.S.:** What are your lifelong dreams?

**R.G.:** That's funny, because for the last ten years my dream was to do this kind of job - to be a Country Director. I find this job really motivating because you can really see the impact of the exchange programs like FLEX and U.S.-CAEF on students. It is very inspiring to talk to participants. When I worked in other development organizations I would never get the same chance to talk directly to people.

**A.S.:** Do you have idols/ heroes?

**R.G.:** I once interned at a civil society development organization, and there was one woman that I worked with who spoke beautiful Russian and Kazakh and who had done her PhD at a Kazakh University (she was American herself). I thought she was a very interesting and smart person. She was like a combination of two cultures, and I found it inspiring.

**A.S.:** What life principles do you value and follow?

**R.G.:** I think the most important things are to be honest and respectful to other people.

**A.S.:** When you were in college, in what clubs and activities were you interested?

**R.G.:** I studied economics and Russian. In the Russian Club, we got to travel a lot, see opera and ballet and do many other fun things. I was also the vice president of a golf club.

**A.S.:** You have a very interesting professional background. You worked for American Councils in Tajikistan, the Aga Khan Foundation USA, the Embassy of the United States in Bishkek and the Eur-

asia Foundation of Central Asia. Could you tell us about your latest work experience?

**R.G.:** My most recent job was with American Councils in Tajikistan. In theory, it was similar to my current position, but in practice they are totally different because the people and the countries are so different. I liked my last job and I really like this one too. I think in any job the challenge is that you have to understand the people that you are working with and their motivations. It is about building a team and establishing trust.

**A.S.:** What did you like most and what surprised you about Kyrgyz culture when you first arrived here?

**R.G.:** I really like Kyrgyzstan. There is no one particular thing that I can pick out. It is really everything: the people, the places, the atmosphere, the energy of the country and the city.

**A.S.:** Many people complain about the fact that work takes much of their free time. How do you maintain the balance between work and personal life? Provide us with some tips.

**R.G.:** Work can easily take over your life. One thing that I try to do here is to keep to my schedule of working hours because I do not want others to feel that they have to stay if I am working late in the office. Keeping a schedule is important because the more time you give to any task, the more time that task will take up.

**A.S.:** What is the best advice given to you? And do you have any advice that you want to give to U.S.-CAEF Fellows?

**R.G.:** It is useful to ask questions in order to learn from others. I think that it is sometimes difficult to ask questions because you might feel that others will think you are not smart. To me, it is the people who ask the most questions that show that they are engaged and who will learn the most. As you move into your careers, it is very useful to ask others how they achieved their professional status. It really does help, and people are almost always willing to answer good questions. I've noticed throughout my career that people are so surprisingly excited to share their stories and give advice.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Adel Sultanbekova

*I am a freshman in the Business Administration Department at AUCA. Also, I am a FLEX alumna 2012. The FLEX experience was a turning point in my life that helped me develop myself. Currently, I am involved in the Enactus Club and volunteering with FLEX alumni. I like learning French, traveling and swimming. My goal is to be a successful business leader and always grow and improve myself as an individual. I believe that dreams come true if you truly believe in yourself and do everything to reach them!*



Rebecca Gordan

## FUTURE LEADERS: Interview with FLEX Alumni Coordinator, Valentina Khomenko

By Asel Dildebaeva

**Asel:** Could you please describe how you became a FLEX Alumni Coordinator? What are your responsibilities?

**Valentina:** At the time when Uliya Tokareva was an alumni coordinator, I was working on a project as a volunteer. Our project turned out to be so much fun and went just as we had expected. Then Yuliya suggested that I become an Alumni Coordinator. I submitted my resume and cover letter. Later I was invited to an interview. In the end, I was chosen for

the role. This position is for a year, and I am responsible for arranging all kinds of volunteer work with FLEX Alumni in order to benefit society.

**Asel:** What inspired you to be an Alumni Coordinator?

**Valentina:** I really think that instead of spending time in front of the TV, I can help someone make his or her life brighter using the skills that I gained in the United States. We acquired a lot of new skills and knowledge in the U.S., and I try to help peo-

ple through volunteering and helping them to set and achieve their goals. The feeling that I helped someone inspires me and pushes me to do even more.

**Asel:** Are there any activities that you learned in the U.S. that you continue to do?

**Valentina:** I signed up for tennis, which I had never played before. Tennis was so interesting and fun that I learned it very fast. I was on the varsity team and no one believed me when I said that I had never played it before. I still love tennis and play it constantly. Also, volunteering.

**Asel:** What does volunteering mean to you?

**Valentina:** Volunteering is a part of my life. Every time that volunteers in Bishkek get together to work on a project, we all recognize each other, and it is a pleasure to always be part of a movement towards success in the community. Even though I don't get paid for it, I learn many things and enjoy doing it.

**Asel:** What are your plans for the near future?

**Valentina:** This year is the 20th Anniversary of the FLEX program. I am planning to celebrate it with other alumni on a large scale. I also plan to successfully complete my FLEX Alumni Coordinator year and do internships, different projects, and of course finish my studies.

**Asel:** Do you follow any rules in order to be a successful young lady?

**Valentina:**

- I am never late for any meetings or deadlines.
- My day is always planned.



Valentina Khomenko

- It is impossible for me to not finish something that I've started.

- I try not to miss any activities related to my job, studies, or any kind of community service. Personally, I think there is a time for everything. We just have to have a desire to do it, and we can do everything.

- I try not to be involved in conflicts with anyone.

**Asel:** As a successful U.S.-CAEF fellow, how would you advise successfully adhering to deadlines?

**Valentina:** I advise making a daily planner and planning everything for the day or the week. It is all related to time management. Since my entire life is one big plan, I split it into days and weeks. For instance, if I have to finish a paper in a week, I split it into six days and do it every day. This way, I have my paper done by the DEADLINE!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Asel Dildebaeva

*Asel Dildebaeva is a freshman studying business administration at AUCA. Her busy life started in the U.S. a year ago when she became a FLEX finalist. Since then, she has been trying hard to improve her understanding of the world. As a result, she became a U.S.-CAEF Fellow. She believes that life loses its meaning and becomes boring without risks. The ability to take a risk is her way to become a confident person. She likes to relax by reading and playing the piano.*

## CIVIC EDUCATION WEEK IN WASHINGTON D.C

By Yerassyl Toleugazinov

I am currently a first year student studying business administration at KIMEP University. I am an alumnus of the U.S. State Department FLEX program. In 2011-2012, I spent my exchange year in the United States living in Lacey, Washington. Being there I learned the spirit of volunteerism and its importance to society. When I returned back home, I continued volunteering in Kazakhstan. I have completed various projects with other FLEX alumni, including volunteering at orphanages and working on ecological issues.

There is an annual special program for around 100 FLEX students who are in the U.S. called Civic Education Week in Washington D.C. Participants were chosen through a very competitive essay contest. Throughout the week, students take part in seminars on the U.S. system of government and discussions with representatives of civic organizations and the media.

Also, the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs welcomes three alumni from Eurasia to represent their FLEX alumni communities. I was nominated by the American

Councils office in Almaty to represent Kazakhstan along with alumni from Russia and Moldova.

During Civic Education Week we had a very busy and interesting schedule. One of the most interesting things included giving presentations to U.S. State Department and American Councils staff as well as FLEX Evaluators and Legislative Representatives at the U.S. Capitol. We talked about the importance of continuing the FLEX program with State Department officials as well as Congressional representatives and their staff members. We discussed current relations between the United States and CIS countries, the projects we have organized, and FLEX communities' upcoming activities.

I led leadership sessions for current FLEX students and shared my experience on how to start a volunteer project and the problems that we faced doing it. We discussed the ideas they might have and the possibility of making them a reality in their home countries. This week was full of interesting meetings, important talks, and unforgettable memories.



Yerassyl Toleugazinov

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Anna Charintseva, AUCA Cohort 2007

It has already been two years since I graduated, and so many things have happened in my life. I have grown in many fields of my profession, and, I believe, U.S.-CAEF contributes to my success a lot. After I returned from the Capstone Internship Program, I was offered a place at Coca-Cola Bishkek bottlers as an accountant. The Capstone Internship Program was an opportunity for me to acquire soft skills, build a network and, most importantly, broaden my professional perspective. I believe that the program, combined with other achievements during my studies, significantly contributed to my success because it allowed me to compete with other candidates who had work experience. I liked the work at Coca-Cola very much because I gained significant work experience and got to know many interesting people there.

After my work at Coca-Cola, I was offered a position at KPMG Bishkek, where I currently work. I believe this was a big step in my career, as KPMG is a leading audit company not only in Kyrgyzstan but worldwide, and I can apply my knowledge, gain new relevant work experience, and meet many outstanding people. The work includes business trips not only within the Kyrgyzstan but also to many cities in Kazakhstan, in which I can build networks. Within KPMG, I have a great opportunity

to audit companies from different sectors varying from commercial banks to mining companies. KPMG organizes its activity in accordance with best practices and, thus, pays great attention to the professional development of its employees. In order to pass the Association of Certified Chartered Accounts (ACCA) exams, I study diverse topics from financial management, audit, management accounting, corporate governance, taxation etc. for the company. We also play an active role in social projects. Employees of our office in Kyrgyzstan visit cancer detection centers to renovate the rooms for children and to study with the kids.

I am a proactive person who pursues new projects and professional development. I believe that I have achieved a lot within two years after my graduation. However, I still have far to go. I am planning to develop not only professionally but also personally. I want to pass the rest of the exams for the CAP (Certified Professional Accountant) certificate, as I already passed half. After I have enough work experience, I hope to pursue a master's degree. I keep living to the words of Mark Strand, who says, "the future is always beginning now," and I understand that I am responsible for my future.



Anna Charintseva

## CONGRATULATIONS TO ASSEL

U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association is extremely happy to congratulate Assel Zhambyrbayeva, a Capstone 2011 alumna! She is a mother now! We wish Assel and her baby to be happy and healthy! We are very proud of Assel who has succeeded not only in her career aspirations and pursuing an MBA degree but she has become a happy mother. She is a role model for many of us!

*With the arrival of your angel,*

*Shall come immense blessings and love.*

*Congratulations on this lovely news!*

*May your family be blessed with loads of happy moments!*

P.S. We are all waiting to see the pictures with smiling faces of our Assel with her little angel!

Tangulu Diushakhmatova  
President  
U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association



Assel Zhambyrbayeva



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