

## Prince Rahim Aga Khan Addresses Kusi Ideas Festival

“Climate change is the most crucial existential phenomenon that Africa, and indeed the world, is currently facing,” said Prince Rahim Aga Khan. He was delivering an address virtually to an audience of distinguished guests of the Kusi Ideas Festival 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya, hosted by the Nation Media Group (NMG), which is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Prince Rahim is also a Trustee of the University of Central Asia.

Themed Climate Change: Exploring African Responses and Solutions, the Festival brought together the best minds to explore solutions to impact the warming climate on the continent.

In his speech, Prince Rahim outlined AKDN’s commitment to respond to climate change and highlighted the transformational work that AKDN agencies were undertaking to meet the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. These efforts include, amongst others, the development of activity-specific tools to measure greenhouse gas emissions; Gold Eco-rating Certification of the Network’s Serena hotels, recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council;



changing of agricultural practices for tens of thousands of farmers; working with rural communities to strengthen climate resilience; and introducing a new concept in schools known as “Play, Pluralism and

Planet” to ensure the next generation of leaders are climate-aware, climate-empathetic and climate-resilient.

Watch the [full address](#).

## UCA Publishes Book on Ancient Monuments of Kyrgyzstan



*Dr. Kubatbek Tabaldiev welcoming guests to the book presentation event.*

Since its founding, the University of Central Asia (UCA) has supported research and documentation of cultural, historical, and archaeological heritages of Kyrgyzstan and the broader Central Asian region. As

part of this effort, the University launched a seminal work by a prominent Kyrgyz archaeologist, Dr. Kubatbek Tabaldiev entitled “The Ancient Monuments of Tenir-Too”.

The presentation of the book was held at a special event at UCA in Bishkek on December 15. The event was attended by well-known historians, archeologists, scholars, museum specialists, and the media.

“I am grateful to UCA for its long-term collaboration and support of regional scholars in publishing and disseminating their fundamental works on cultural and historical heritages of Central Asia to a wide range of audiences,” said Dr. Tabaldiev speaking at the book launch.

The new work of Dr. Tabaldiev builds on archeological research catalogued by his earlier book on this topic published by UCA in 2011.

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## UCA Contributes to National Dialogue on Food Security



Participants at the round table discussion on food security.

Dr. Kanat Tilekeev, Associate Director of UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration, delivered a presentation on food security issues in Kyrgyzstan at a round table discussion hosted by the Association for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex in Bishkek. The event was attended by food security experts and analysts, government officials, and business associations.

In his presentation, Dr. Tilekeev underlined that the country is heavily dependent on im-

ported goods, putting its food security at risk. This situation could be addressed by reforming policies to stimulate domestic production with a limited environmental footprint.

Dr. Tilekeev also reported that 2.2 million people, or about 30 percent of the population, live on less than two US dollars a day. Increasing food prices have negatively affected the food basket of the population, while the level of their basic income has not changed. The poverty rate has increased up to 33 percent.

## UCA Alum Receives CAFDP Scholarship at Simon Fraser University

After graduating from UCA in June 2021, Bermet Burkanova, UCA Computer Science Alum, started her career by accepting a job offer from Procter & Gamble. Working remotely as a Marketing Technologist, Bermet was responsible for consumer profiling, precision segmentation and e-com reporting. She also worked on Prediction Models for Volume forecast.

Recently, Bermet received UCA's Central Asian Faculty Development Program (CAFDP) scholarship to pursue a Master's in Computing Science at Simon Fraser University in Canada, where three other UCA Faculty (Makhfirat Olimshoeva, Maqsad Suriev and Shams Sharif) and a UCA Alum (Karlygash Kussainova) are also in the process of pursuing their graduate studies supported by CAFDP.



Bermet Burkanova.



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## UCA Publishes Book on Ancient Monuments of Kyrgyzstan

Since then, the author has discovered many new archeological materials, including findings related to the cultural history of ancient and medieval tribes of Tenir-Too (Tien-Shan) mountains, and has included them in the newly published book. It also contains a multitude of illustrations attempting to reconstruct objects and rituals that ancient people interacted with.

The author's recent discoveries offer an unorthodox view of the history of the ancient and medieval populations that resided on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. He challenges the existing view that the lifestyle of these populations was exclusively nomadic. The book has been published in the Russian language, and the English version is expected in 2023.

According to Dr. Elmira Kochumkulova, Director of the Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit of UCA's Graduate School of Development, Dr. Tabaldiev's work contributes to a better understanding of the historical heritage of Central Asia. The author provides important insights into the complex archeological past of ancient populations that inhabited the territory of present-day Kyrgyzstan.

## UCA and University of Oxford: Examining Post-Pandemic Societies of Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia



At Meiji University, Japan, UCA researchers collaborate with Professor Tohakiro Ozaki at Kagoshima University.

The University of Central Asia’s (UCA) Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA), has partnered with the University of Oxford and several Japanese universities to understand the socio-economic and geographic dimensions of Covid-19 responses in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia.

Covid-19 has significantly impacted develop-

ment progress in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia. Yet the pandemic also has created new opportunities to innovate, evaluate, and redirect policy and practice across rural communities and traditional livelihoods. This has encouraged IPPA researchers to join colleagues from Mongolia, Japan, and the UK to conduct original field research to clarify how households in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia have navigated the pandemic.

“Our new endeavour is both about advancing civic engagement and inclusive recovery through an evidence-based and collaborative approach. It is about empowering researchers at every stage of their career through a comprehensive capacity building and skills development programme,” – underlined Dr. Kemel Toktomushev, Co-Principal Investigator of the project and a Senior Research Fellow at IPPA.

UCA along with UK and Japanese research teams have extensive experience working in the region featuring a nuanced understanding of the local contexts.

Commenting on this new project, Professor Christopher Gerry, Dean of UCA’s Graduate School of Development stated, “This partnership represents an outstanding opportunity to combine local and international expertise to mentor and nurture a new generation of Central Asian scholars, while also helping to shed light on how Kyrgyz and Mongolian households have navigated their way through the pandemic and its aftermath.”

## Impact of Climate on Rural Livelihoods

Central Asia is a region with scarce water resources, and a population for which agriculture remains the main source of livelihood. There is heavy reliance on irrigation, which is channeled from mountain rivers.

Dr. Maksim Kulikov, a Research Fellow of UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute presented the findings of his research addressing the impact of climate on local communities in the Isfara river catchment. The conference on sustainable development of Batken region of the Kyrgyz Republic was hosted by the United Nations Development Programme.

In 2020, the UCA studied the historical data of Isfara river runoff, temperature and precipitation in the river catchment as well as data on remotely-sensed vegetation index (NDVI). The research was informed by a series of interviews with residents of local communities who shared their observations of changes in climate and its impact on natural resources.

The Isfara river is very important for the Batken region and downstream agriculture in



Isfara River with the orchards in the background.

the Sughd region of Tajikistan and Ferghana region of Uzbekistan. It is one of the three rivers in the Batken region and provides water for more than 40 villages in Batken district of Kyrgyzstan and Isfara district of Tajikistan.

The research revealed the environmental changes in the studied area, which are driven by climatic and economic factors and have direct impact on residents and local econo-

my. Residents are generally aware of climate change and resource scarcity, and have intuitively adapted their income strategies to the changing environment. However, growing population requires more resources, which means that more efficient agricultural technologies need to be introduced, more added value products developed to create new jobs.

Read full text of UCA research [here](#).

## AAP Graduate Goes Abroad for Higher Education



Malinga Behruz was enrolled in SPCE's Academic Achievement Programme in Khorog, Tajikistan from grade 7 to 11. This course helped her improve English language skills and acquire advanced knowledge of essential subjects. Her dream to study abroad was fulfilled when she successfully passed the IELTS exam and got acceptance to Pearson College in Canada which is a two-year pre-university school offering an International Baccalaureate programme.

"I sincerely appreciate all the efforts my teachers provided to give me quality education to ensure that I have every opportunity to grow and improve further. My education at SPCE over the last five years has played an important role in helping me to achieve this great success," said Malinga, expressing her appreciation to her teachers at SPCE.

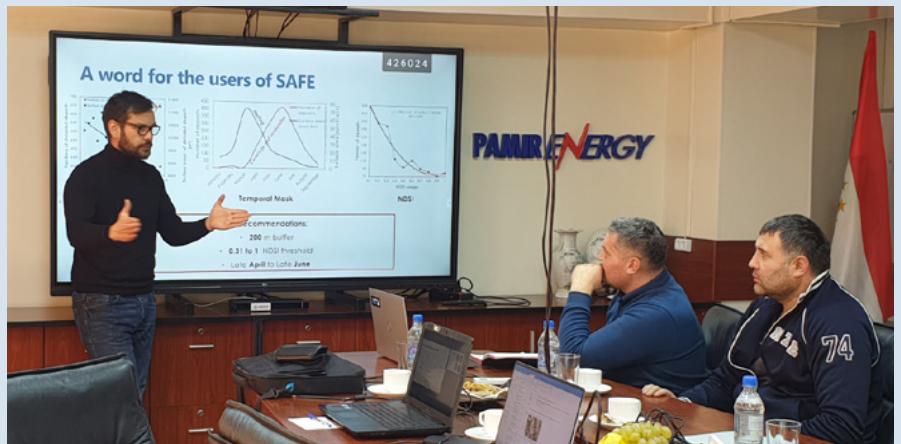
## Charity Fair in Tekeli



Fair participants accept donated gifts.

The fair was held in December 2022 at the SPCE facilities in Tekeli, Kazakhstan, and included an exhibition of artworks created by disabled children from SPCE's School of Arts Mamania. Named "Darmarka" and themed "Give Things a Second Life," the event aimed to encourage people to donate their belongings in a generous and kind-hearted manner. Members of vulnerable families and others in need attended the fair and accepted the donated items, including clothing and books. Some participants brought homeless pets to be placed in loving hands. This was the second time that the SPCE organized such a charity fair.

## UCA and Pamir Energy Collaborate on Climate Monitoring



Dr. Arnaud Caiserman (left) presenting the SAFE method.

UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) and Pamir Energy discussed potential hazards and climate monitoring collaboration in GBAO, Tajikistan at a meeting in December 2022.

Pamir Energy representatives were briefed about SAFE - Snow Avalanche Frequency Estimation, an automatic method developed by Dr. Arnaud Caiserman of MSRI to map avalanche frequency and target valleys, roads, villages, and powerlines

in remote, vulnerable, and data-limited locations. The method was validated in Afghanistan and the research findings were published in a reputable scientific journal - the Cryosphere and also featured in Nature magazine in 2022.

Pamir Energy expressed great interest in this method and reached an agreement with MSRI to enhance research and practical collaboration in GBAO and beyond.

## UCA Staff at AKDN Quiz Competition



Members of UCA team at AKDN Quiz Competition.

UCA employees participated in a quiz competition in Bishkek organised for agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The event brought together over fifty participants who competed by showcasing their general knowledge of world's history, arts and music as well as AKDN's work in Kyrgyzstan.

The participants of the event were welcomed by Dr. Barkat Fazal, AKDN Diplomatic Representative who underlined

the importance of such events encouraging interactions between employees of AKDN agencies.

Ten teams representing various AKDN agencies and programmes including the AKDN office, UCA, Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank, Aga Khan Foundation, Aga Khan School, Aga Khan Music Programme, Jubilee Insurance Company and Accelerate Prosperity participated in the competition. KICB and the AKDN Office were the winning teams.

## Supporting Peripheral Museums in Kyrgyzstan



*Museum specialists attending the seminar.*

As part of its Central Asian Museum Development Programme, UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) assists small and remote museums in Kyrgyzstan to create new content relevant for their communities. Alтын Kapalova, a CHHU Research Fellow recently conducted a series of seminars for 90 museum specialists in various locations across the country, including Batken, Issyk-Kul and Osh regions.

UCA focuses on cooperation with peripheral museums which often lack access to information and additional training. "The semi-

nar was the first professional development course I have attended since 1992. This was an excellent opportunity to acquire new knowledge, exchange experience and meet colleagues from other museums in the region," – noted Saidakpar Abdyganiev, Director of the Museum at Ermatov High School in Kara-Bulak, Batken region, sharing his positive impressions from the seminar.

Another participant of the seminar, Alтын Moldokulova, Director of the Historical and Ethnographic Museum in Alai district of Osh region underlined the importance of this

learning activity: "Many of us who work in museums lack basic museum education, so this seminar helped address this issue. It would be good to organise similar activities supporting younger personnel of museums as well."

The programme of the seminars included visits by CHHU staff to village museums where discussions on museum policies of the Kyrgyz Republic were organised. An exhibition "New Silk Road and Heritage of Central Asia" of works of artists from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan was the highlight of each of these visits.

## SPCE Training Gives Boost to Tourism in Murgab District

Saitaali Gaybuldaev is a graduate of the Executive Entrepreneurship Training in Tourism offered by UCA's SPCE, within the Accelerate Prosperity Asia project. He resides in the Murgab District of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, Tajikistan, and runs a company "Pamir Guides" established in 2008 to provide various services to tourists including mountain and cycling tours, trekking, camel and yak rides in the Fann Mountains as well as the Pamirs.

"My goal is not only to make a profit for myself, but to also share it with local suppliers, so we can succeed together and improve the quality of life in our region. Thanks to SPCE I acquired new knowledge and skills to advance my business. Now I know how to write a business plan, promote a product, and create a website. I also established new business

partnerships in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan, as well as Europe and North America, and secured foreign investments to launch new tourist routes. Upon return home, I would like to apply for a grant to build a larger office and a tourist center in Murgab," – says Saitaali sharing his positive impressions about SPCE's training programme.

Saitaali is one of the 24 owners of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the tourism sector from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan who participated in an advanced 45-day programme conducted by SPCE in 2022. The programme is specifically designed to encourage business linkages, form partnerships, and promote development of joint ventures with a view to facilitate export promotion and access to new markets for SMEs in the region.



*Saitaali Gaybuldaev at SPCE's training on tourism.*

## SPCE Hosted Fulbright Scholar Studies on Mental Health Issues in Tajikistan



*Dr. Savani delivers a training course on mental health at SPCE, Dushanbe.*

Dr. Shahnaz Savani, Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Houston-Downtown, and a Fulbright Scholar, is leading a multi-year research project examining mental health problems in Tajikistan. More specifically, her research examines people's attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of mental health and mental illness, and the associated stigma. Questions to be answered by this study include what people in Tajikistan think about mental health and illness, their level of mental health literacy, and their attitudes toward mental health treatment.

Dr. Savani has had multiple research visits to Tajikistan since 2013 when she was invited to be part of a team conducting a comprehensive mental health needs assessment in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. After that, she returned several times to continue her studies and collect data for her dissertation on lived experiences of suicide attempts. She has a robust and long-term working relationship with UCA, which is interested in developing the capacity for mental health education and training in Tajikistan and the broader Central Asian region. Dr. Savani is currently working on her

mental health research in Dushanbe with support from SPCE.

Mental illness is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and more than a million people die by suicide each year. This burden of mental illness and suicide mainly affects low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Tajikistan was chosen as the base for this research due to an urgent need for training, education, and research in the field of mental health in the country. The significant gap in the country's mental health needs is currently unmet by educational institutions in Tajikistan. It is expected that Dr. Savani's research will have a notable impact on this issue as it will draw the attention of decision-makers to the problem and bring about positive change. The research will share important data with the country's Health Ministry and other service providers so they can tailor their mental health services to the needs of the peoples of the country.

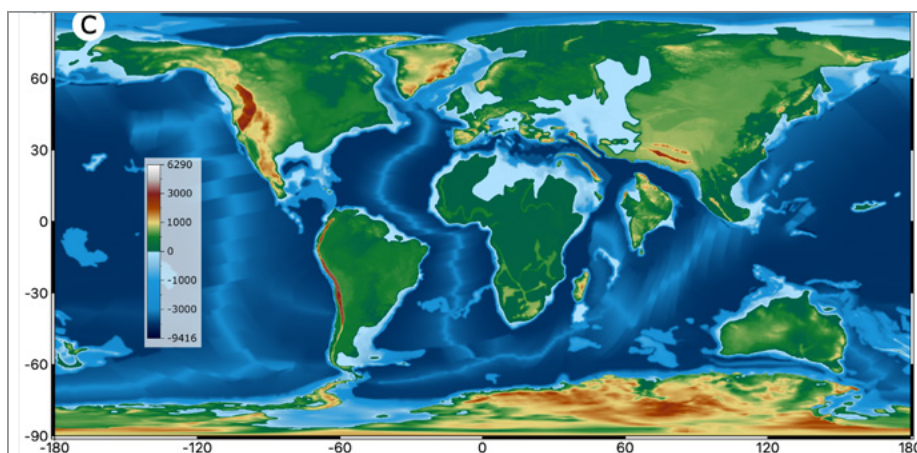
Dr. Savani holds a PhD in social work from the Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston. She is a licensed social worker and an experienced practitioner in behavioral and mental health issues. Her research interests focus on mental health awareness/education in low- and middle-income countries, suicide prevention/intervention in the Global South, particularly in Central Asia.

## UCA Faculty Develops Software for Paleogeographic Reconstructions

In collaboration with colleagues from the University of Potsdam, Jovid Aminov, Assistant Professor at the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department of UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, has developed a software named Terra Antiqua for paleogeographic reconstructions.

The software allows researchers to reconstruct geography from the past, creating maps for timesteps of tens and even hundreds of million years ago. These paleogeographic maps can be used for visualization purposes in all fields of Earth Sciences, and additionally form boundary conditions for climate models trying to predict climate change in the near and far future. The open-source software can be accessed [here](#).

The software has been presented to the



*Paleogeographic map created using Terra Antiqua software. The map shows the Earth's geography during the Paleogene period (50 million years ago).*

General Assemblies of European and American Geoscience Unions and a paper will be published by the Journal of Earth Science Reviews in 2023. The tutorials were organ-

ized for students from various universities across Europe and UCA students on Khorog Campus in November 2022. Video sessions can be found on [Terra Antiqua YouTube channel](#).

## UCA Aids Professional Development of Kyrgyz Teachers



Biology teachers from high schools across the region at the Naryn Campus attending STEM pedagogical training.

The ability to think critically and challenge standards is a basis of innovation. Considering the gaps between knowledge delivered through educational systems and talents required at workplace, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), education plays an increasingly important role in helping students acquire needed 21st century skills.

Following the footsteps of a number of countries around the world, Kyrgyzstan recently implemented a STEM-based educational system. Several professional development programmes were introduced across the country through the country's the Ministry of Education to help teachers acquire the required pedagogical skills.

Dr. Ian Phil Canlas, Senior Lecturer of Science at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, has been working on a research project for the past several months collecting data to study the knowledgebase, efficacy and readiness of mathematics and science teachers for teaching STEM in Kyrgyzstan. The sample is being collected from high schools in Naryn and Osh regions. The study is aimed at providing baseline information highlighting the gaps in professional development. As part of his research project, Dr. Canlas invited teachers from across the Naryn region to UCA's Campus on several occasions delivering STEM pedagogical trainings.

The research has been funded by UCA's Faculty Research and Scholarship Fund.

## Training of School Teachers



University of Central Asia (UCA) conducted a series of professional development trainings for school teachers of the Batken region in collaboration with leading civil society organisations supporting school education – ProKG Network of Professionals of Kyrgyzstan and Fund for Educational Initiatives. Offered online by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), the learning program focused on preparing teachers for national examinations in various subjects including mathematics, Kyrgyz and Russian languages. The training also included sessions on the teaching of

## Faculty Set to Hear Stories of Naryn River



Lucy (2nd from left) and Nursultan (right) interviewing meteorologist, Toktobek (left), from Eki Naryn village.

For hundreds of years, Kyrgyz men and women have created music, poetry, art, artefacts and stories to celebrate the origins, meaning, and significance of the Naryn River and its tributaries.

Continuing the practice, filmmakers and multimedia specialists from UCA – Nursultan Stanaliev and Lucy Palmer, are recording stories of men and women who have an intimate relationship with the river. The piece aims to capture the multi-dimensional narratives concerning the cultural importance of the Naryn River, and its aquifers, streams, and reservoirs, to the people who live there.

Funded by UCA, the project entitled *Flowing to Infinity: Stories of the Naryn River* will be featured in a soon-to-be launched digital student magazine *Yellow Space*. Using a creative blend of vision, sound, story, music, and art, these artistic and poetic evocations will be explored against the background of climate change and pollution.

English language conducted by Dr. Hamid Ali Khan, Assistant Professor of English for Academic Purposes at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences.

"I sincerely appreciate this highly relevant and useful learning opportunity which will help improve my students' academic performance," said Chinigul Paizova, a teacher of Gaipov School and a participant of the training.

## UCA Students Excel at Programmes Overseas



Kairat (left) receiving a Certificate from Mr Takeju Ogata, President of the Nippon Foundation, and Ms Kyoko Vrboski, Chairperson of JACAFA Foundation.

Sharing a similar vision with UCA of inspiring young leaders and developing regional co-operation, the Japan-Central Asia Friendship Association (JACAFA) has awarded two scholarships funded by the Nippon Foundation to UCA's School of Arts and Sciences students - Ulugbek Karimov and Kairat Berdishaliev, contributing towards their academic expenses.

The Scholarship will also provide an opportunity for students to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities and network with individuals from diverse backgrounds, where they can further develop this opportunity by collaborating with NGOs, government institutions, and think tanks, to implement projects for the benefit of the region.



Zeeshan presenting his paper at the OIC Conference in Kazan.

Fasih Uddin and Zeeshan Ali, students at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, were invited to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Science Conference in Russia to present their research papers on the issues of urbanization and migration flow affecting rural and metropolitan areas, and the role of modern technologies in education.

The international conference welcomed over 100 participants from 20 countries across the world in Kazan. Fasih and Zeeshan are freshman students currently pursuing their undergraduate degrees at the UCA's Campus in Khorog, Tajikistan.



Ayana Supueva, freshman student, proudly holding Kyrgyz flag during the exchange week in USA.

Four students from UCA's School of Arts and Sciences - Ayana Supueva, Aizada Berdibekova, Farzona Akhmedova and Umar Nurov, participated in a two-week cultural exchange programme in October 2022 sponsored by the U.S. Department of State entitled ALEX – American Leadership Experience Program.

### In Memoriam



Arata Isozaki, the renowned Japanese architect, and designer of the master plan of the University of Central Asia, passed away at his home in Okinawa, Japan at the age of 91. Isozaki's work has been recognised globally through several accolades, including the 2019 Pritzker Prize. He also served as member of the Master Jury of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1998.

### SPCE Student Chooses UCA Over Other Universities

Navras Gulayozov is an 18-year-old student who studied English at UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Dushanbe from 2018 to 2022. He was also an active member of other activities offered by SPCE such as Discussion and Debate Clubs, Project Qandeel, and No Bullying.

After graduating from SPCE, Navras applied to and received full scholarships from several universities including the University of Central Asia (UCA), the American University in Central Asia in Bishkek, and KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Eventually he chose UCA and is now studying as a prep year student at UCA majoring in Global Economics.

SPCE is a leading provider of short-term vocational training in Central Asia, delivering





courses in a flexible learning format that enhances employment and income opportunities and paves the way for lifelong learning.






Navras Gulayozov at UCA's Khorog Campus.

#### UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

Advancement and Public Affairs  
125/1 Toktogul Street,  
720001, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan  
Tel.: +996 (312) 621 979

 [PublicAffairs@ucentralasia.org](mailto:PublicAffairs@ucentralasia.org)  
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