

UCA Chairman's Tajikistan Visit



Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha with Mr Rahim Saidzoda (right), Minister of Education and Science of Tajikistan.

During February 2023, Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman of UCA's Board of Trustees visited Tajikistan and met with several Government officials. He emphasized the importance of education in promoting progress and prosperity in the country and expressed appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for its continuous support in furthering the programmes and objectives

of UCA. Dr Kassim-Lakha highlighted UCA's achievements in improving access to quality learning opportunities for the people of the country. The meetings also provided an opportunity to explore opportunities for new areas of collaboration and cooperation.

During the visit, Dr Kassim-Lakha also signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoU) with

the Tajik State National University. This partnership will benefit both institutions by enhancing the quality of education and research. The MoU also aligns with UCA's mission of promoting social and economic development in Central Asia, and the broader goal of advancing education and knowledge in the region.

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New Trustee at UCA – Dr Anvar Safarzoda

UCA is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Anvar Safarzoda as the new nominee of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan on its Board of Trustees.

Dr Safarzoda has an impressive record of contributions in law and education in Tajikistan. He served as an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Law at the Tajik National University from 2012 – 2015, becoming Head of the Department in 2015.

Dr Safarzoda received his PhD in Law from the Tajik National University in 2011 and is the recipient of an award of Excellence in Education and Science of the Republic of

Tajikistan (2015). He also received the State Award for Young Scientists in the Field of Science and Technology (2016).

UCA conveys its sincere appreciation to the retiring UCA Trustee Lutfiya Abdulkholiqzoda for her contributions and support of UCA over the past four years. Her experience of governance and management of universities, in the national and regional context, were invaluable in charting the University's strategic direction and further development of its academic programmes. UCA looks forward to continued collaboration with her as Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan.

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UCA Chairman's Tajikistan Visit



With Mr Alisher Khudoberdi Mirzonabot (left), Governor of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).



Mr Rizo Nazarzoda (left), Mayor of Khorog presenting a Rubab, a traditional Tajik musical instrument, to Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha.



Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha with Dr Kobiljon Khushvakt Khushvaktzoda (left), Rector of Tajik State National University at the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation.

UCA Faculty Contribute to Special Issue on Central Asia



Villagers from Kek-Debe, Issyk-kul, assisted in building a monument to commemorate the lives of people who experienced Urkun. The monument is designed by Altyn Kapalova and Kina Yusupova.

Dr Elena Kolesova, Faculty at UCA's Communication and Media Department, co-published a special issue on Central Asia for the New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies. This special issue was published to introduce the region to scholars in Australasia and encourage more field research.

One of the articles in this special issue is co-authored by Dr Kolesova and Altyn Kapalova, Research Fellows at UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit. In this article, the authors examine stories from the descendants of people who lived through Urkun (forced exodus). This relates to the

forced migration of Kyrgyz people to China (Xinjiang region) between 1916 -1934. Understanding of Urkun by the descendants of Urkun's survivors, linked through the process of 'postmemory', helps construct relations between the past and present and between individual, cultural, and national memory. It helps to understand how people make sense of the past, connect it with their present, and how they manage to interpret the effects of the past on their own lives.

Link to the special issue of the New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies: <https://www.nzasia.org.nz/all-issues.html>.

Certificate of Honour



The Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic has awarded Nurbek Nisharapov, Head of SPCE Kyrgyzstan, with a Certificate of Honour for his contributions to social and economic development of Naryn Province.

The award was presented by Nurbek Sydygaliev, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament in recognition of his active involvement in local self-government initiatives, dedication to educating the younger generation, and supporting the development of mountain communities.

UCA Research Fellow on Expert Committee to Review Decarbonisation in Kazakhstan



Dr Madina Junussova (standing 5th from left) with colleagues from USA and Kazakhstan.

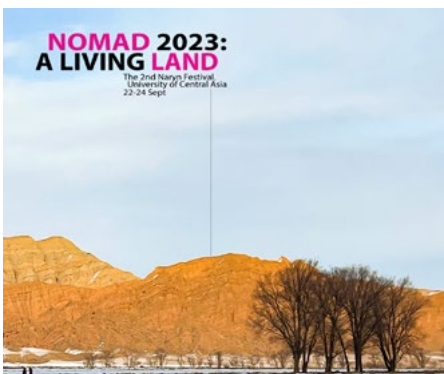
Dr Madina Junussova, Research Fellow at UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration, has been selected to participate in the Kazakhstan Futures program, a six-month fellowship program funded by the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan. The project aims to bring expert communities from the United States and Kazakhstan to enhance objective analysis of salient topics in public discourse.

As part of the project, Dr Junussova will work with her colleagues from the University of

Kansas, and the American University of Central Asian Bishkek, to develop a policy brief to analyse how the decarbonisation policies of Kazakhstan impact the country's mining regions and towns. The research will compare the efforts of other countries in Central Asia and the United States to identify best practices and develop recommendations.

Dr Junussova recently shared the findings of her study in an interview with the Kazakh news agency Vlast available [here](#).

Nomad 2023: A Living Land



"Nomad 2023: A Living Land" is an invitation for the mountain communities and those in the creative arts of Central Asia to engage with the multi-dimensional concept of land during a three-day festival to be held in September 2023. The festival will explore how land not only shapes communities and individuals but is also moulded and changed by human activity.

The notion of "A Living Land" incorporates all forms of life, animate and inanimate, everything beneath, within, and above the earth. Notions of land and sustainability also extend to the way the natural environment "speaks" in return, and its role in ongoing human survival and spiritual identity.

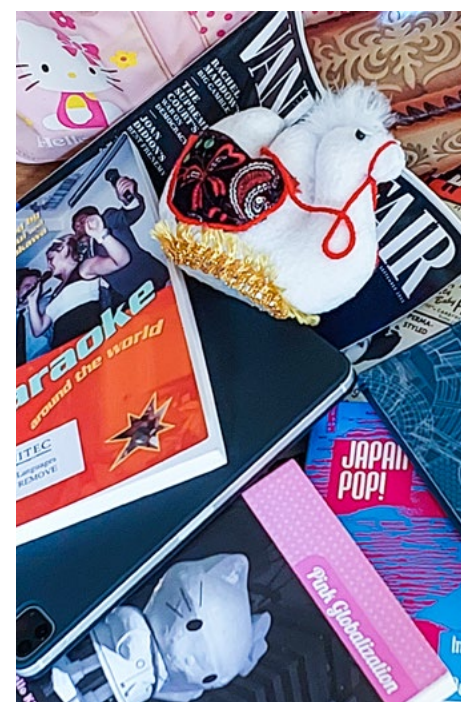
The festival of "A Living Land" will engage communities through a regional film festival and multimedia poetry competition, awards, practical workshops, fashion, digital imaging, music, and immersive performances, and explore its many-layered meanings and manifestations.

To learn more about the festival and submit entries for the film festival and poetry competition, please visit here <http://www.centralasia.org/nomad2023>.

UCA to Introduce New Course on Popular Culture in Central Asia

Dr Elena Kolesova, Faculty at UCA's School of Arts and Sciences, received a grant from the Eurasia Foundation to deliver a new course "Popular Culture in Central Asia: East meets West". The grant will allow experts and practitioners in popular culture to be invited from around the world and from the Central Asian region to deliver lectures and workshops at UCA.

Popular culture offers a way of examining societies, cultural identities, and ideologies across time and geography. It also plays a powerful role in shaping societal attitudes, values, and ideologies. "Popular culture" means not only cultural texts distributed via mass communication networks, but also everyday practices and new digital media that give voice to grassroots sentiments. The course will discuss simple but important questions. Why is popular culture popular? How do we all use popular culture in our daily lives? What can the story of popular culture tell us about ourselves? What influence does popular culture have on shaping our perceptions of other countries and nations? Finally, can we improve mutual understanding and relations between different countries through learning about the impacts of popular culture from one country or region on another.



Symbols of popular culture

UCA Receives Appreciation for Contributing to Women's Empowerment



UCA Research Fellow Nargis Kuchakshoeva (2nd from right) with leaders promoting women's empowerment in Tajikistan.

The Civil Society Initiative of UCA was presented a Certificate of Appreciation by WAGE (Women and Girls Empowered) for its efforts in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through Civil Society projects in Tajikistan. The Certificate was presented on 6 March 2023 at an event dedicated to the presentation of the National Women Business Agenda in Tajikistan.

In the Certificate, WAGE expresses appreciation to UCA for its leadership in developing and advocating for the National Women Business Agenda in Central Asia, and for its professionalism, aspirations, and commitment to developing women entrepreneurship in Tajikistan.

UCA is at the forefront of improving conditions for the expansion of economic rights

and opportunities for women in Central Asia.

WAGE is a global consortium led by the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, and works in close partnership with the Center for International Private Enterprise, Grameen Foundation, and Search for Common Ground to promote women's economic empowerment.

AKIpress Journalists Visit UCA Naryn Campus

A group of journalists from AKIpress, led by Senior Editor Aslan Sydykov, visited the University of Central Asia's (UCA) Naryn Campus on March 1st. During their visit, the journalists received an introduction to UCA's academic programmes and community outreach initiatives. They also met with UCA's senior academic officers to explore potential areas for collaboration in events and activities.

The AKIpress delegation engaged in discussions with UCA students, addressing topics ranging from the current state to future prospects for the development of media and communications in Kyrgyzstan and the broader Central Asian region. The journalists also had the opportunity to visit UCA's SPCE, Aga Khan Medical and Diagnostic Centre, and Naryn Park rehabilitated by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, to learn more about the diverse programs



Visitors learn about innovative technologies and resources offered at UCA's Media Lab.

implemented by UCA and the Aga Khan Development Network which support the social and economic development of Naryn.

Kubanychbek's Entrepreneurial Journey in Rural Naryn

Kubanychbek Abdyev lives with his parents in Min-Bulak village of Naryn Province. As a young boy, he wondered why his family had to travel to Naryn town market to buy a single egg or some vegetables when they could have everything they needed right in their own village.

Years later, with the help of SPCE's "Business Plan Development Using Mini-Technology" Programme, Kubanychbek's dream became a reality. In 2021, he pitched his idea for a chicken farm and successfully secured SPCE funding for the project.

Today, Kubanychbek's chicken farm in Min-Bulak village provides eggs not only for his family, but also for the entire community. He has hired five people from his village to help with the operation, and they look after 1,300 chickens that produce 1,200 eggs daily.

Kubanychbek's success has not gone unnoticed. He plans to expand his business by



Kubanychbek Abdyev in his chicken farm.

starting a green house project next to his chicken farm. He also hopes to send more young people from his village to SPCE's entrepreneurship trainings.

Reflecting on his journey, Kubanychbek is grateful for his supporters. "I am really happy that my dream came true. I thank my parents and SPCE for their support and trust in me".

SPCE Supports Mountain Tourism in Kyrgyzstan



Iliiaz taking a young tourist on a horse ride through a picturesque landscape outside Bishkek.

Iliiaz Imanaliev was among young entrepreneurs from Kyrgyzstan selected for the Executive Entrepreneurship Training in Tourism offered by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Bishkek. His decision to apply to this learning programme

was driven by his desire to improve and grow his business.

Iliiaz runs a company offering horse ride services across many locations in Kyrgyzstan where he supports local shepherds by using

their services and horses. His company's comprehensive tour itineraries are popular with foreign tourists coming from different parts of the world.

Iliiaz also owns a horse farm and a nomadic stable named after a horse from Chingiz Aytmatov's famous novel Gulsary. Operating out of Ala Archa National Park, the farm offers horse tours on mountain trails in Kyrgyzstan. Iliiaz also contributes to the training of local horse tour operators by writing for training manuals published by the Kyrgyz Association for Community Based Tourism, and Helvetas, a Swiss development organisation.

"The mission of my team and I is to provide high-standard and ethically appropriate services. I am glad to be able to attend the SPCE training programme as it has boosted my knowledge and skills so that I can now properly develop financial and business operation plans and implement marketing campaigns to offer more attractive services to my potential clients," says Iliiaz sharing his observations about the entrepreneurship programme, which is offered by SPCE as part of the Accelerate Prosperity in Asia project funded by the European Union.

UCA Signs MoU with Ala-Too International University



Dr Nurlan Shaidullaev, Faculty of Computer Science (2nd from left) demonstrating the 3D printer and scanner facility to the AIU delegation at UCA's Naryn Campus.

Expanding partnerships with universities in Central Asia, UCA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a longstanding partner - Ala-Too International University (AIU).

As part of this new MoU, UCA and AIU have agreed to expand their collaboration on the exchange of expertise including teaching, learning, and research. In addition, UCA's Computer Science (CS) Department will also co-supervise PhD students at AIU.

"As a University-wide agreement, this MoU

will open new cooperative paths strengthening the academic relationship between UCA and AIU," says Dr Ayman Aljarbouh, Chair of the UCA's CS Department.

With a view to advancing this partnership, several AIU representatives including its Rector Sanjarbek Erdolatov visited UCA's Naryn Campus on March 11.

AIU was also one of the partners of the Nomatic Image 2022 international conference organised by UCA in 2022.

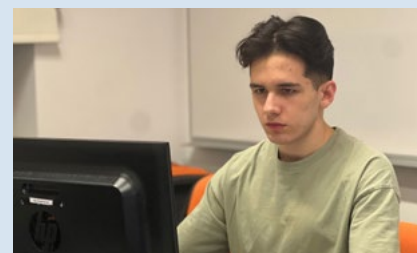
Chid Chat



Faculty with their family members, and students at UCA's Khorog Campus were recently brought together for the Chid (House) Chat event to promote cultural dialogues and foster new ideas and collaborations. The event started by introducing

guests to the Badakhshan house's symbolic and meaningful construction, where every pillar has a name, representing the universe. Jalaluddin Rumi's poems, wisdom, and quotes were shared during the event to inspire hope, love, and self awareness.

Impact of SPCE's Academic Achievement Program



Ali Davlatshoev is a 19-year-old student who has recently enrolled in the University of Central Asia (UCA). He has spent the past 11 years living and studying in Dushanbe. From ninth to eleventh grade, Ali was enrolled in the SPCE's Academic Achievement Program (AAP), which was particularly helpful in preparing him for his university entrance tests.

Ali credits the program for providing him with the knowledge and experience he is now utilizing in his university studies. "I had long been interested in attending UCA but was uncertain about how to prepare. By attending SPCE, I was able to improve my English language skills and enhance my critical thinking abilities.

Ali emphasizes that the final year of the AAP program was particularly productive. He spent a significant amount of time reading, writing, and listening, which helped him prepare for UCA's entrance exam. Today, Ali is a proud freshman studying Computer Science at UCA's Naryn Campus.

AAP is a holistic program offered by SPCE to prepare secondary and high school students for undergraduate college and university applications. It spans five years, during which students study English, Information Technology, Mathematics, and Science.

Participants of the Chid Chat event later shared their thoughts on what fascinated them most about the beautiful mountains of Pamir. Melodious tunes of various musical instruments such as rubob and daf filled the atmosphere with peace and tranquillity.

After having meaningful conversations about culture while enjoying music and food, one of participants shared, "We not only received physical nourishment but also spiritual food, and being inside the Badakhshan chid (house) gave us a special feeling."

UCA Alum Inspires Youth Interested in Artificial Intelligence

Karlygash Kussainova is a Fellow of UCA's Central Asian Faculty Development Programme. She made history by becoming Valedictorian at UCA's First Convocation in 2021. She graduated with a degree in Computer Science and was later awarded a full scholarship by Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Canada, to pursue a graduate degree in Computer Science. Her research focuses on the NFT (non-fungible tokens) market, where she uses various data analysis tools including Machine Learning techniques.

In addition to her research, Karlygash is also passionate about inspiring young girls interested in STEM. She volunteers her time teaching Artificial Intelligence and Data Science at AI4ALL, a US-based nonprofit ded-

icated to increasing diversity and inclusion in AI education, research, development, and policy. She hopes to encourage and empower the next generation of women in the Computer Science field.

Karlygash's hard work and dedication have led her to a position as a Big Data Analyst at SFU's Big Data Hub, where she collaborates with Data Hub partners on various projects related to data literacy in Canada.

Outside of her academic and professional pursuits, Karlygash has also found time to pursue her passion for Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. She has competed in local tournaments and recently won a gold medal in the leath-



Karlygash Kussainova

SPCE Students Enjoy St. Valentine's Day

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) and the Education Department of Tekeli organized an open-door event on St. Valentine's Day, which included a competition and dance party for high school students.

About 50 students participated in the event, which is held every year. The event received positive feedback from the participants, with one student saying, "It is great that there is a place where we can study, meet other learners, and also have fun."



CHHU Presentation on Museum Practices in Kyrgyzstan



Participants at the CHHU Presentation

A recent study on cultural policies and museum practices in Kyrgyzstan was presented by UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) at an event in Bishkek on February 7 which was attended by directors of museums from urban and rural areas of the country. The study aims to generate new knowledge, enhance professional links between museum specialists and improve museum policies.

The final report of the study is expected to be released in March 2023. Following their participation in the presentation, Aigul Mambetkazieva, Director of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts noted, "these meetings are critically important for building professional connections." Aida Alymova, Director of the Center for Nomadic Civilizations emphasized "the importance of such events for developing museum science in the country".

A Step towards Inclusivity - Basketball for All



A participant of basketball training at UCA's sports bubble in Naryn.

To promote the idea of an inclusive community, Kairat Berdishaliev, a student at UCA's Naryn Campus, successfully concluded an outreach project "Basketball for All" for children with Autism and Downs Syndrome.

Inspired by a similar project in Bishkek, Kairat brought the idea to Naryn town by organising basketball training at UCA's sports bubble for children to further enhance their engagement with the community. With several other UCA students, Kairat also invited students from high schools in Naryn to help create a safe space for the participants.

The project has been funded by the University of Central Asia and FLEX Alumni Grants supported by the US Embassy in Bishkek.

UCA Students on Academic Exchange Programmes

Mahtob Mirzojonova, a senior student majoring in Global Economics at the University of Central Asia (UCA) participated in the Erasmus+ mobility program and spent a semester studying Business Administration at the University of South Eastern Norway in 2022. During her time in Norway, Mahtob also volunteered with an organization called "Frivillig" which organizes events for marginalized groups in the community.

In her own words, Mahtob reflects on the value of her exchange experience: "In addition to receiving a high-quality education at UCA, this exchange semester in Norway was an invaluable time for personal growth, learning about cultural diversity, and making lifelong friends. UCA taught me all the necessary study skills such as academic writing, group work, presentation skills, and critical thinking which helped me to adapt to this new environment".

As an experienced student who has benefited from an exchange program, Mahtob also shares some advice for her peers: "I advise my fellow students to believe in their abilities and always strive for the best. There will be many opportunities along the way, and never think that the standards are too

high for you or that you are not competitive enough. You have all the tools you need, just work on developing them and don't miss out on any opportunity".



Mahtob Mirzojonova

Zaynura Kaykovusova, a senior student majoring in Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Central Asia (UCA), knows first-hand the power of determination and the importance of overcoming excuses. Her desire for personal growth and new experiences led her to participate in the UGRAD exchange program spending a semester at the Centenary College of Louisiana in the United States. Through this pro-

gram, Zaynura gained valuable insights into different cultures and expanded her understanding of the world.





Sharing her insights about her exchange experience, Zaynura said, "I am grateful to be part of this program thanks to which I met friends from different parts of the world and learned about their cultures. They made me feel at home, and we still keep in touch. I also participated in community service programs, which taught me valuable life skills. As a result, my passion and desire to serve my community has grown even more, and I am eager to make positive changes for the future."






Zaynura Kaykovusova

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