

UCA Partners with United Nations to Host Youth Forum in Naryn



Governor Ergeshov and Antje Grawe at the Youth Seminar at UCA. Associate Dean Soheil Ashrafi welcoming the participants.

To inform the upcoming intergovernmental Sustainable Development Goals Summit, scheduled for September 2023, the United Nations (UN) hosted youth seminars globally with a special emphasis on rural towns. In Kyrgyzstan, the UN partnered with University of Central Asia's School of Arts and Sciences to host the youth seminar at UCA's Naryn campus. The event brought together 40 youth from Naryn, including five UCA students. The aim of the session was to listen to youth voices

on how to make the world a fairer, greener and a more sustainable place.

The high-profile seminar saw the presence of Mr. Altynbek Ergeshov, Governor of Naryn Oblast, Ms. Antje Grawe, UN Resident Coordinator for Kyrgyzstan and Dr. Barkat Fazal, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network in Kyrgyzstan. Dr. Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean at UCA Naryn and host of the event, encouraged youth to use their "power of imagination" and be the "agents of change".

He also reiterated UCA's commitment to the development of mountainous communities in Central Asia, especially the three founding states.

During the forum, the youth spoke of the need for more socio-economic opportunities for rural youth and for equal and inclusive opportunities for youth with disabilities.

UCA Introduces Core Organisational Values to Shape Its Culture

After extensive consultations over the last two years with staff across the University, UCA has rolled out a set of core institutional values. They are Integrity, Agility, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Collective Strength, Respect, and Excellence. These values will serve as a foundation for how UCA interacts with its stakeholders — faculty, staff, students and partners. They are intended to create a positive work environment, build a strong employer brand, and strengthen relationships with partners.



UCA Celebrates 35th Anniversary of UNESCO Silk Roads Programme

At the invitation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO), the University of Central Asia (UCA) participated in the 35th anniversary celebrations of the Silk Roads Programme, an initiative of UNESCO, launched to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Silk Roads. The event brought together global experts to discuss the cultural, economic, and social significance of the ancient Silk Roads.

Dr. Aizharkyn Kozhobekova, Director of UCA's Civil Society Initiative, and Aibek Baiymbetov, Research Fellow at UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit, represented UCA at the event.

A recipient of UNESCO's "Silk Roads Youth Research Grant", Aibek Bayimbetov presented his findings on the study of religious syncretism in the mountain communities of the Pamirs and Tien Shan.

Dr. Aizharkyn Kozhobekova, who has represented Kyrgyzstan in the International Network of Focal Points for the Silk Roads Programme, and has also served as a mem-



Dr. Aizharkyn Kozhobekova (second from right) engaging in panel discussions at the UNESCO Symposium.

ber of the Scientific Panel for the Silk Roads Youth Research Grant, underlined that cultural research should adopt a more ecosystem-based approach that would contribute to sustainable development and respond to issues of climate change, gender inequality, and cultural hegemony. She also stressed the importance of diversifying knowledge products and disseminating research findings to supporters of cross-cultural dialogue and marginalised communities.

SAS Students Attend Winter School in Scotland

Seeking interdisciplinary and experimental ways of connecting with geographic locations in modern life, seven students from UCA's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) traveled from Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, to attend the Glasgow School of Art's (GSA) Winter School. During the week long experience, students explored new ways to address contemporary cultural and technological challenges.

The theme of the Winter School 2023 was "Indigeneity" and the programme included lectures, workshops, and networking opportunities. Sharing the vision of GSA's Winter School, Prof Gordon Hush, Head of the Innovation School, said, "Students from around the world with diverse backgrounds work together in teams where they explore topics beyond their curriculum. This is the place to

shift their attention from disciplinary studies to thematic studies."

UCA students described their experience as filled with creativity, exploration, and change of perspectives. Azra Nisar, a Computer Science student at UCA remarked that, "The Winter School was about immersing yourself in a rich tapestry of contemporary indigenous knowledge and culture."

Highlighting the growing importance of UCA's relationship with GSA, Dr. Soheil Ashrafi, Associate Dean and Chair of the Communications and Media Department, said, "GSA's Innovation School faces the same development and growth challenges as UCA. This evolving partnership with the Innovation School, GSA allows for faculty development and mobility, students exchanges, opportunities in global scholarship and practices in curriculum design."

The two institutions plan to engage in joint research and implement creative projects which involve deeper engagement with the community.



Azra Nisar (standing 3rd from left) presenting her project on the crafted representations of indigenous culture.

Hackathon for Girls on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

The University of Central Asia's School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) organised the *EcoKyzdar* (EcoGirls) Hackathon on "Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability" at the UCA Campus in Naryn. The event welcomed 49 girls from diverse backgrounds across Kyrgyzstan, including students from UCA.

Nestled amidst the splendid Tenir Too mountains, young women aged 17-21 gathered to deepen their understanding of climate change, collaborate on addressing various environmental issues and build new friendships. At the end of the hackathon, contestants presented to a panel of expert judges their innovative ideas to address environmental challenges. The ideas included: a) the development of a robot arm to separate recyclable trash from other waste, b) adding QR codes to fabric bags used at grocery stores for their loyalty programmes, c) producing sustainable book covers and d) teaching young girls how to make traditional Kyrgyz handicrafts and help them launch tourism-related startups.

"At UCA, we recognise that achieving gender equality requires more than providing 'equal' opportunities. By creating a programme exclusively for young women, we aim to address the gender-based inequities that exist in STEM fields and provide a more level playing field for young women to succeed. This effort contributes to the broader vision of the UCA Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, who emphasises that building a more inclusive and pluralistic



Young girls pitching their recycling project "Converting Plastic Bottles into Filament" to the panel of experts.

society promotes peace and development in society." — said Kiran Bhimani, Faculty at SAS and lead member, organising team of the Hackathon.

The event concluded with Elnura Asan-gazy Kyzy, Vice Mayor of Naryn, awarding the competition winners monetary prizes sponsored by UCA. To further develop the ideas that emerged during the hackathon, the winning team has been invited to participate in the Accelerate Prosperity Incubation Programme, an initiative of the Aga Khan Development Network. Accelerate Prosperity will offer the winning team an opportunity to secure \$10,000 to invest in their startup.

"For many children and young people, climate change is the most pressing issue. We

have also seen how young people are currently taking the lead throughout the world in campaigning for climate action. Since girls and young women are disproportionately affected by climate change, we need to ensure that they participate in this movement and develop innovative green initiatives. If we give them the right opportunities and provide a positive learning environment, as we did during this Hackathon, young Kyrgyzstani leaders can emerge who will make a difference and contribute to the collective climate change response," — said Christine Jaulmes, UNICEF Representative in Kyrgyzstan.

Participants also attended sessions on Design Thinking, Public Speaking, Women in Leadership, Financial Literacy and Fundraising. These workshops were conducted by eminent and distinguished industry leaders.

Naryn Librarians and UCA Celebrate World Book and Copyright Day

On the occasion of the World Book and Copyright Day, Ahmad Ali Shah, Librarian at University of Central Asia's Naryn campus, in collaboration with other librarians from Naryn region, organised a public event in Naryn where the audience was invited to embrace the joys of reading. The World Book and Copyright Day, held annually on 23 April, celebrates and promotes the enjoyment of books and reading. This year's event featured the importance of native languages in literature and storytelling.

In his remarks at the Naryn event, the UCA Librarian spoke about the importance of reading, the role of books in an individual's life, and the issues associated with copyrights. The event contained storytelling and book reading sessions alongside a display of products and activities prepared by local librarians and community members. On this occasion, UCA also conducted a Master Class on Book Reading in the Kyrgyz language for young participants of the event.



Celebration of World Book and Copyright Day in Naryn.

Digital Skills Training for Civil Servants



Training for officers of the Ministry of Emergency Situations at SPCE's Campus in Naryn.

To enhance digital skills among civil servants in Kyrgyzstan, the University of Central Asia (UCA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Digital Development has launched a series of training as part of the "Digital Central Asia & South Asia (CASA) - Kyrgyz Republic" project. Half of the 1500 training participants are women.

The trainings, offered by distinguished industry experts and organised by UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration, and School of Professional and Continuing Education, include topics such as data analysis and privacy, principles of digitization management of IT projects, cybersecurity, and Artificial Intelligence.

Training on Innovative Teaching Methods for Khorog State University



Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov from University of Toronto was invited by UCA's Mountain Universities Partnership to deliver a series of seminars on innovative teaching methods for Khorog State University. Mountain Universities Partnership is UCA's initiative to help mountain universities in four countries improve their quality of education and contribute to socio-economic development of mountain communities.

Dinara Musabekova Memorial Lecture Explores Digital Citizenship



Tattuu Mambetaliyeva addressing the participants.

UCA's Civil Society Initiative organised an Annual Public Lecture to commemorate the inspiring legacy of its Founding Director, Dinara Musabekova. Through her dynamic leadership, Dinara Musabekova achieved remarkable results in a short period of time and is remembered for her passion, intelligence, and leadership skills.

This year's lecture, themed "Digital Citizenship: Challenges and Opportunities of the Digital Era", was delivered by Tattuu Mambetaliyeva, Lead Partner, International Consortium for the Development of Digital Legislation. The audience comprised members of civil society, academia, and international organisations.

The session included topics such as competencies needed to become global digital citizens, steps to protect personal data and resist cyberbullying and scamming. The speaker underlined that since digital legislation is actively developing around the world, it is crucial to strike a balance between the digital rights of individuals and national security. Individual users need to practice good "digital hygiene" and minimise leaving "digital traces".

Run for Earth, Run for Future



UCA staff participating in Jaz Demi Marathon.



UCA students running for RUN4EARTH, RUN4FUTURE marathon.

As part of UCA's effort to promote a healthy lifestyle, its students and staff took part in marathon events in Khorog and Bishkek held around the Earth Day celebrations.

Students from UCA's School of Arts and Sciences Khorog campus partnered with Little Earth, a local environmental non-profit organisation, to organise a marathon titled RUN4EARTH, RUN4FUTURE. The marathon was held under a student-run environmental project,

active since 2018, which is raising awareness on ecological issues and implementing environmentally sustainable practices such as zero waste and recycling at the Khorog campus.

In Bishkek, 30 staff from UCA's Central Administration Office participated in the annual *Jaz Demi* (Spirit of Spring) Marathon, now in its fifth year. Staff ran distances of 5, 10, and 21 kms. This marathon was also an opportunity for team building.

New UCA Publications

Abu Ali ibn Sina's Philosophy of Nature: Analysis of the Concepts of Space, Movement and Time



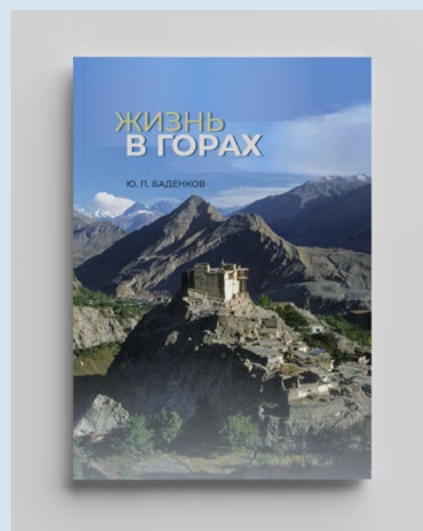
This work by Jonboboev Sunatullo, Senior Research Fellow of UCA's Cultural Herit-

age and Humanities Unit, examines the intellectual heritage of Central Asia and its relevance to modern society, focusing on Ibn Sina's philosophy of nature. It highlights his theories on motion, time, and space as well as the influence of Muslim culture on modern civilisation. This study, reminds us of the rich intellectual traditions of Central Asia, and is a valuable read for scholars and students of Islamic philosophy. The link to the book is [here](#).

Life in the Mountains: Environmental and Cultural Diversity

The e-book by Dr. Yuri Badenkov on his seminal work: "Life in the Mountains: Environmental and Cultural Diversity – Diversity of Development Models" is the product of decades of his research on mountain communities in multiple geographies.

The book presents a comprehensive discussion of the ethnocultural, environmen-



tal and socio-economic predicaments of mountain communities in various geographies, including Central Asia and their search for sustainable development models. The last chapter deals with UCA as a case study on the role of education in mountain development. The link to the book is [here](#).

Research Collaboration with Universities of Oxford and Cambridge

Oxford University's School of Geography and Environment as well as Cambridge University's Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit recently hosted Dr. Kemel Toktomushev and Zalina Enikeeva, research fellows at UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration. The discussions focused on potential collaboration and joint research.

While at Oxford, the fellows also attended two conferences - on Desert Research and on Geohazards, which focused on integrating geoscience innovations in risk and resilience.

Zalina Enikeeva, who studied the role of women during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kyrgyzstan, expressed her delight at the opportunity to work with scholars from Mongolia, Japan, and the United Kingdom: "This partnership provides an excellent opportunity to share experiences on how residents of pastoral ar-



UCA research fellows with representatives of University of Cambridge's Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit.

ea in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic." She and Dr. Kemel Toktomushev also highlighted the possibility of collaboration between UCA and these universities in advancing research to better understand critical issues of development in Central Asia.

Promoting Traditional Music Heritage



Osh school students demonstrating their musical talent at CHHU training.

To promote the preservation of traditional music heritage and support creative thinking among young musicians of the country, UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) organised a series of musical training sessions for more than 20 music schools in the Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad regions of Kyrgyzstan. These trainings benefited more than 100 students and teachers from these schools. They introduced students to their musical heritage through ethnosolfeggio, which not only shapes

their musical thinking but also their personality as future performers.

Yasina Salieva, a student participant from Batken region praised the programme: "Before this training, I did not think I could compose music. It gave me tremendous inspiration, knowledge, and self-confidence." In 2022, CHHU also distributed its publication of Ethnosolfeggio textbooks to music schools nationally, enabling music teachers to adopt interactive teaching methods.

UCA Researcher Presents at International Conference on Infrastructures of Memory

At the Third International Conference on the concepts of memory and decolonisation, Asel Murzakulova, Senior Research Fellow at UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute, presented the thematic issue of the interdisciplinary journal "Nemonomief" titled "Infrastructures of Memory: People, Relationships, and Times".

The 2023 Conference was titled "Esimde" (In My Memory) based on the efforts of researchers, who in 2022, led an expedition along the path of the events of 1916. The conference brought together researchers, public figures, activists, and those review-

ing historical memory in their works.

"The issue focuses on the sites of memory infrastructure such as monuments, mosques, and sites of Soviet modernisation policies as well as new practices of activism around the preservation of cultural heritage. The authors reflect on the politics of memory of the present, allowing the readers to experience the engagement and search shared by the authors." noted Asel Murzakulova.

The publication can be accessed at <https://ru.esimde.org/archives/5755>.



Asel Murzakulova (centre) speaking at the Conference.

Promoting Eco-Friendly Construction Technologies in Central Asia



Participants of the first cycle of SPCE Executive Entrepreneurship programme in Green Technologies.

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) launched its first cycle of Executive Entrepreneurship courses, focused on green technology solutions in the construction sector. The aim of this programme is to promote eco-friendly construction technologies, especially in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. These trainings,

conducted in Bishkek in a hybrid format, also aim to enhance business-to-business linkages across Central and South Asia.

The first cycle of training brought together 18 participants who, during the intensive sessions, learned Business Model Canvas, Services and Relationship Building, Envi-

ronmental Control Systems and their Impact on Architecture, and Energy Efficient Architectural Practices. The sessions were delivered by renowned trainers from Pakistan — Dr. Farrah Arif from Lahore University of Management and Science and Dr. Ayesha Mehmood Malik from the University of Management and Technology.

UCA Instructor Invited by Kazakhstan Government to Train Budding Athletes

The Regional Department of the Ministry of Physical Education and Sports from Kazakhstan's Zhetisu Oblast invited a senior instructor at UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education in Tekeli, to conduct a Master Class for its budding athletes.

Oksana Tolepbergenova, the facilitator — also a qualified psychologist — trained the participating athletes on the mental preparation needed before any tournament. The session, held at the Regional Olympic Boarding School in Taldykorgan, was attended by over 100 young athletes from individual sports such as boxing, judo, Greco-Roman wrestling, and weightlifting.

During the session, the facilitator also taught relaxation techniques to the athletes and explained, through exercises, ways to fully mobilise physical and mental energies.



Young Kazakh athletes attending the Master Class by UCA instructor Oksana Tolepbergenova.

SPCE Success Stories from Tajikistan and Afghanistan

Since 2006, University of Central Asia's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) has trained over 220,000 learners (52% women) on a range of post-secondary and professional education courses. These courses, offered in a flexible learning format, aim to improve employment and income-generating opportunities for the learners. The success stories of three graduates from Tajikistan and Afghanistan demonstrate that.

Tahmina Mirali, a senior Tajikistan civil servant and Director of the Center for Foreign Languages, attributes her significant career progression to the English language courses for civil servants she attended at SPCE in 2018. Tahmina is very appreciative of SPCE's teaching methods, the learning materials, and the motivation from her teachers.

"My English language proficiency is the main reason that I was selected for this senior position as the National Director of the Center for Foreign Languages. My knowledge and training at SPCE allowed me to excel at a very competitive selection process," shared Tahmina Mirali.

Odilzhon Faizov underwent two intensive courses in 2019 at SPCE Bokhtar, Tajikistan. He is a graduate of the Academic Achievement Programme and also attended Computer Science training. He is now successfully pursuing a computer science degree at Ulyanovsk State Technical University, one of Russia's leading technical and re-



Tahmina Mirali (right).

search universities in the field of Economics and Computer Science.

"I am immensely grateful to SPCE for providing me with incredibly useful courses. The IT instructors were exceptional professionals who imparted a wealth of knowledge that I could immediately apply in practice. The resources, and motivation I received were invaluable, and I credit my teachers for helping me realise that IT is the field in which I want to excel," shared Odilzhon Faizov.

A graduate of SPCE in Kabul, Afghanistan, Ferdaus Sultani joined SPCE to expand his knowledge and teaching experience in English. During his time at SPCE, he excelled in his classes and was one of the most active learners. Upon graduation from SPCE, Ferdaus Sultani received a job offer as an

English instructor at Hujat Private High School, one of the prestigious schools in Afghanistan.

Reflecting on his time at SPCE, Ferdaus noted, "I am grateful to SPCE for providing me with not only a strong foundation in English language, but also equipping me with innovative teaching methods and strategies that I can implement in my own classes. The knowledge and skills I gained at SPCE have been instrumental in advancing my professional career and personal growth."

The career advancement of Tahmina, Odilzhon, and Ferdaus and their inspiring stories are a testament to the transformative power of the high-quality training programmes offered by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education.



Ferdaus Sultani.



Odilzhon Faizov at Ulyanovsk State Technical University.

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