UCA’s Contribution to Open Government Partnership Recognised

The University of Central Asia (UCA) was recognised by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on December 20th 2019 for its significant contribution to the implementation of the Open Government Partnership in the Kyrgyzstan, specifically related to the disclosure of mining industry data.

The Institute of Public Policy and Administration at UCA, in partnership with the University of Oxford and the Independent Research Institute of Mongolia, conducted a study of local communities regarding their information needs with respect to mining companies. This study determined that local communities and employees of mining companies from among local residents need more information on the volume of reserves, extraction, processing and exportation of minerals, employment opportunities, and environmental and health impacts. The study was conducted with financial support from the British Economic and Social Research Council and the Global Challenges Research Fund.

UCA and Kyrgyz Ministry of Education to Expand Collaboration

Senior representatives of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the University of Central Asia met with Mr. Kanybek Isakov, Minister of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan, and Chinara Maatkermova, Head of the Department of International Cooperation.

Among the topics discussed were ways to further enhance collaboration with the Ministry.

UCA is also helping to establish a laboratory for practical research and scientific examinations in the food processing industry, particularly milk production in the Naryn Oblast. Concluding the meeting, the Minister expressed interest in visiting UCA, and confirmed the Ministry’s full support and readiness to collaborate with all AKDN initiatives and programmes aiming to improve education in Kyrgyzstan. He appreciated UCA’s role as a unique university with high-quality facilities, offering world class education in the mountain communities of Central Asia.

L to R: Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman of UCA’s Board of Trustees, and Diplomatic Representative of AKDN in the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Kanybek Isakov, Minister of Education of Kyrgyzstan, and Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, Rector of UCA.
UCA Joins UiPath Academic Alliance to Empower Students for the Future

UCA has joined the UiPath Academic Alliance programme, offering its students and staff training in Robotic Process Automation (RPA), a key technology that is considered one of the top disruptive and emerging technologies trends of 2019. This partnership will enable members of the UCA community to access contents of basic RPA courses developed by UiPath, and gain RPA literacy and skills over the next three years.

“This can be especially helpful for UCA students, as it is hoped that through these basic courses, they will be better prepared for the workplaces of the future which are expected to be infused with automated and cognitive technologies,” noted Shaukat Ali Khan, Chief Information Officer at UCA.

UiPath launched the Academic Alliance in May 2019 as a framework for working with leading institutions, universities, and colleges to craft the global RPA knowledge ecosystem, and help graduates to fulfill the needs of the future job market through an inclusive community of educators. Through the programme, UiPath aims to train more than one million students, and partner with one thousand accredited institutions of higher learning globally over the next two years.

Built around the initiative to offer ‘a Robot for Every Student,’ the programme affords the ability to introduce RPA to the entire university, college or campus, whether the student is majoring in technology, business or any other field. The students can create their own software “assistants” to help them prepare for classes, do faster and better research, search for financial aid or jobs, or even innovate a new process or solution to support non-profit work for the betterment of society.

New State-of-the-Art TV Studio on Naryn Campus

UCA’s Naryn campus recently completed construction of a state-of-the-art TV production studio, which is being used by UCA’s Communications and Media programme students. Students are receiving training on the different elements of a TV studio, how to use various approaches when presenting, as well as how to use lighting and camcorder equipment. Nursultan Stanaliyev, a Film Director, Editor, and Camera-man from the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, also conducted a 3-day workshop on film editing on Adobe Premiere.

UCA Undergrads Win Volleyball Tournament

UCA held a volleyball tournament at the Naryn campus sports bubble in December, aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and team-building. UCA’s undergraduate student team won first place in the tournament.

Participants represented UCA students, faculty, and staff, as well as UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education and the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme office in Naryn. The Mayors of Naryn and Balykchy oblasts (provinces) also participated in the opening ceremony of the tournament, which was broadcast on local television.
New UCA Partnership with University of Auckland

Representatives from the University of Auckland (UOA) in New Zealand, recently visited the University of Central Asia (UCA) in Bishkek and Naryn (Kyrgyzstan), to foster academic exchange and cooperation between the universities.

Professor Diane Brand, Dean of the Creative Arts and Industries faculty at UOA, and Ralph Buck, UOA Associated Professor and Programme Head for Dance Studies, met with UCA staff, faculty and students, learnt more about UCA’s undergraduate programmes, and discussed initiatives for joint activities with UCA, including exchange programmes and opportunities for graduate education.

Concluding the visit, Professor Diane Brand (left) from UOA signed a memorandum of understanding with Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, Rector of UCA, that will facilitate exchange of materials, publications and information; cooperation between professors and research staff, student mobility, and joint research.

Ustatshakirt Ensemble Performs for UCA Students in Bishkek

Freshmen students at UCA’s Naryn campus were treated to a special performance by the Ustatshakirt ensemble in Bishkek, established and supported by the Aga Khan Music Initiative. The event exposed students to rich Kyrgyz musical traditions, and was followed by a visit to the Gapar Aitiev Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts.

The trip was organised by UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit as part of a course on “Cultural Landscapes: Traditions and Innovations in Central Asia” at UCA. In their coursework, students discussed issues related to the revitalization and safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including the work and activities of major international cultural and development organisations.

Recently, the Ustatshakirt ensemble showcased Kyrgyzstan’s cultural heritage at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where Kyrgyzstan was officially elected into the Executive Board of UNESCO.

UCA Promotes Kyrgyz Culture and Language in Naryn

Undergraduate students at UCA representing eight countries are learning the Kyrgyz language at the Naryn campus. Taught by Rahat Akylova, Kyrgyz Language teacher at UCA, students have been practicing in the Naryn community and on field trips to the Naryn Drama Theatre, Ruh-Ordo, and Issyk-Kul.

“It is always easier to study a language by communicating with native speakers,” said Rahat.

American faculty member and Senior Lecturer of History, Rebekah Ramsay, is also learning Kyrgyz and hopes to spend some time with a Kyrgyz family during the summer to further develop her Kyrgyz skills.” Learn more in this news report by NTS TV station in Kyrgyzstan: https://youtu.be/OnfqCa5fYVE

UCA News ▪ January 2020
Communications and Media students of UCA’s Class of 2021 are exploring how to brand Naryn to promote socio-economic opportunities in the mountainous regions, and enhance the quality of life in Naryn Oblast by providing better jobs and living conditions in the region. Students presented branding proposals to a panel of UCA faculty and staff, and some will also be formally presented to the Naryn government authorities for consideration.

The Branding Naryn project was the focus of UCA’s Junior Students’ Strategic Communications course, through which the class was divided into three groups, each group offering a short-term and a long-term project promoting tourism, organising cultural and sports activities, and raising awareness about the region’s environmental problems and activities that could ameliorate the negative impacts of the worldwide environmental crisis on the region.

In particular, the projects proposed involved organising a Central Asian ethno-cultural festival, launching an extreme sports centre, developing and promoting the Son-Kul area, promoting plastic-free Naryn, planting 1,000 trees by the end of 2020, and changing the mindset toward eco-shopping by encouraging local businesses to produce organic goods and supporting new business in Naryn that would make environmentally-friendly products. Each project recommended tailored activities and communications strategies such as posters, banners, brochures, making use of national and international media, running specially-designed websites, as well as conducting capacity-building training sessions as needed. Read more.

UCA Eco Warriors and Aarhus Centre Collaborate to Protect Environment

Students from UCA and Naryn State University participated in a workshop on developing cooperation on environment protection issues. It was organised on December 12th by UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) at the newly established Aarhus Centre, based in UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education learning centre in Naryn.

As part of the event, UCA’s student-led Eco Warriors environmental club delivered a presentation highlighting the importance of their work, and proposed that similar recycling initiatives be implemented throughout Naryn town.

“The work of UCA’s Eco Warriors club is in perfect alignment with the mission of the Aarhus Centre to create awareness and sensitivity among local communities towards environmental issues and their connected problems,” said Samat Kalmuratov, MSRI’s Research Fellow and coordinator of Aarhus Centre. “We will work closely with students from UCA and Naryn State University on joint projects in the region to engage neighborhood communities to promote sound environmental behavior and take up relevant actions.”

The event also included a photo exhibition by the Swiss Sustainable Mountain Art initiative on “Glaciers in Agony”. It aims at using presentation tools to raise awareness about the challenges facing mountain regions. The exhibition was organised to celebrate International Mountain Day, which is celebrated each year globally on December 11th.
Mr. Akram Madumarov (centre), Governor of Batken Oblast and his accompanying delegation, visited UCA’s Naryn campus, and School of Professional and Continuing Education on December 4th, where they interacted with faculty, students and staff. The visitors complimented the quality of UCA’s teaching staff and students, the strength and relevance of its academic programmes, and the University’s exceptional facilities.

Following the visit, Mr. Madumarov expressed interest in further cooperation between UCA and the Batken Oblast: “Access to quality education is central to social development, and I firmly believe that a partnership with the Aga Khan Development Network in this area can have a significant and positive impact for our Oblast.”

Library staff at UCA initiated a campus-wide book collection as part of a “One Person, One Book” programme, which is providing books to the Naryn community.

It was organised by the KulturCafé Naryn in collaboration with civil society organisations in Naryn town. Well done to all UCA faculty and students who enthusiastically supported this campaign.

Twenty-three schoolchildren, parents and teachers from the Aga Khan School (AKS) in Osh (Kyrgyzstan), visited UCA’s Naryn campus. They received practical and comprehensive information about teaching, admissions, financial assistance opportunities, the cooperative education programme, student life, and more.

“I really liked UCA, including its architectural features, and its international standard training programme. I learnt that UCA also prepares students for their future career through internships and mock interviews.” said Keldibekova Ayana, Grade 10 student from AKS. “After graduating from high school, I plan to apply for UCA’s Communications and Media programme.”

The Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) of UCA hosted its Fourth International Debate Tournament on December 22-23 using its unique Cross-Debate Format. Participants from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and UCA’s Campuses in Khorog and Naryn competed in the tournament. The UCA Khorog Campus Debate team (Zainab Muborakshoeva, Anusha Ashurova and Nitasha Aslam Khan) won the tournament, followed by representatives from Almaty in second place, and AKHP English Humanities Course students in third place. Congratulations!
UCA Holds Entrepreneurship Training in Afghanistan

Over 145 Technical and Vocational Education trainees from the Aga Khan Foundation participated in entrepreneurship training organised by UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education in Faizabad, Ishkashim, Wakhan and Zebak in the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. The two-week training consisted of 60 academic hours, and provided participants with necessary knowledge on how to start or expand a business, and generate new business ideas.

The programme was implemented by UCA's SPCE in cooperation with the Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan, and supported by the Government of the Netherlands under the Afghanistan Community-Led Economic Stability (ACES) Project, and the European Union under the TVET Action for Alternative Livelihood for Irregular Migration (TAALIM) Project.

Natural Resource Management Workshops in Afghanistan

The Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) of UCA held a workshop for its Certificate programme for Natural Resources Management at Badakhshan University and Bamyan University (pictured) in December. Over 85 faculty members and students participated in the sessions, which were led by Afghan instructors who received training in Bishkek from MSRI in July 2019.

“The work of UCA is highly valued and appreciated,” said Mr. Niaz Zakiri, Vice Chancellor of Badakhshan University, during his opening speech at the workshop. “UCA's academic and professional services are helping build capacity of graduate students and faculty members.” He also expressed interest to further collaborate, and extend cooperation between the two universities in the field of training and research.

80 Khorog Youth Participate in Mental Math Olympiad

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) organised the 2nd Mental Math Regional Olympiad for learners aged 7-14 in Khorog (Tajikistan) on December 8th. This competition gathered over 80 participants showcasing their mental arithmetic skills.

Twenty-four students received prizes in various categories, including six champions, as well as first, second and third place winners. Panjshanbe Nazarshoev, representative from the Regional Education Department, congratulated participants and presented prizes to the Olympiad winners.

Good to Know!

KICB Recognised as Best Bank of Kyrgyzstan in 2019

The Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank (KICB) received one of the most prestigious awards, the “Bank of the Year 2019” from The Banker Magazine. An international panel of judges of “The Banker” selected KICB as Best Bank for the second successive year. This award is presented to banks in 140 countries based on the criteria of dynamic growth of the bank, development and implementation of innovative banking technologies, as well as implementation of strategic projects.

According to the judges of “The Banker”, the main factors that determined KICB's recognition were resilience to external factors, commitment to innovations in technology and information security, and sustainable CSR activities.

The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), founded, and is the lead shareholder in KICB. Ten AKDN agencies currently operate in the Kyrgyz Republic, including the University of Central Asia. Learn more at: https://www.akdn.org/where-we-work/central-asia/kyrgyz-republic
Diplomatic Dialogues with UCA's Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network to the Kyrgyz Republic, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Central Asia, was the guest speaker at a “Diplomatic Dialogues” event on December 18th 2019 in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). It was organised and moderated by Daniar Amanaliev, Co-Founder of the Ololo group.

See full interview at: https://youtu.be/xpTTBYtdOis

New UCA Study Guide for Naryn Schools

A new study guide for Grade 5-11 secondary school students on “Soil Study and Evaluation through Experiments” was released on December 17th for teachers and education departments in Naryn. The manual was developed by UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute in Kyrgyz and Russian languages, and is approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The manual consists of five thematic sections, and provides instructions for conducting 16 experiments, using affordable materials, as well as several practical tasks for schoolchildren. According to the authors, the manual’s educational material will help to significantly expand the knowledge of students in geography, chemistry, biology and physics. The experiments were demonstrated at the event, and tested in pilot schools in Naryn city, At-Bashy and other areas previously involved in the PALESCA project’s activity on citizen science development over the last two years. Concluding the event, the manuals were handed over to 15 schools in Naryn city, At-Bashy, and neighbouring regions, as well as three regional departments of education. The manuals are available for free download in Russian and Kyrgyz.

Nomads and Intuitive Health

The Aga Khan Humanities Project of UCA held a public lecture on “Intuitive Health in Modern Nomads Understanding,” delivered by Almaz Sharman, Professor of Medicine, and President of the Academy of Preventive Medicine. He discussed nomadic culture, including its history and distinguishing features of nomadic lifestyle. He also covered how nomads had well-balanced lifestyle, including staying active and hydrated, maintaining good sleep habits, and having a balanced diet, which he recommends emulating to achieve a high quality of life. The lecture was organised on December 19th at the Impact Hub in Almaty (Kazakhstan).

UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit has published the English version of a research paper discussing the ancient layers of archaeological sites and artefacts that were discovered during the construction of the University of Central Asia’s campus on the Naryn river bank.

It is available for free download from UCA’s website in English and Russian.
UCA Goes Digital with Launch of SAP Cloud-Based Platform

Shaukat Ali Khan (left), UCA Chief Information Officer, and Alexey Petunin, Deputy General Director of SAP signing the partnership agreement in December.

UCA launched a digital transformation project on that seeks to boost the efficiency of students and faculty in all countries, where the University operates. The “SAP S/4HANA Cloud” cloud-based platform is an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) planning system, which will become the University’s “digital core”, integrating all data and processes – from managing documents in paperless form, to online reporting, to administrating academic activities and human resources.

Naryn Campus Open House

Registration is now open for UCA’s Naryn Campus Open House on February 16th 2020. Grade 11 students wishing to enroll in UCA’s undergraduate programme in the 2020-2021 academic year, parents, as well as high school administrators are welcome to attend. Interested participants are encouraged to register online (http://bit.ly/NarynOpenHouse) by February 7th.

Undergraduate admissions are open for the 2020-21 Academic Year at UCA, which offers an international standard of education, dedicated and qualified faculty, full scholarships and grants, and a vibrant student life. Learn more at: www.ucentralasia.org/admissions

Upcoming Conference on Border Dynamics in Central Asia

The Mountain Societies Research Institute of UCA’s Graduate School of Development is pleased to announce a call for participation in a regional conference on “The Art of Neighborhoods: Border Dynamics, Natural Resources, and Mobility in Central Asia,” to be held on February 5th 2020 in Bishkek. Learn more at: https://ucentralasia.org/Resources/Item/2478/EN

Start the New Year with a New Job

The University of Central Asia is looking for professionals to join its School of Arts and Sciences, School of Professional and Continuing Education, Materials Management Division, and Operations teams. Visit http://bit.ly/uca-jobs for details on vacancies and upcoming deadlines.