Princess Zahra Aga Khan and Trustees Visit UCA

Princess Zahra Aga Khan, the eldest daughter of UCA's Chancellor His Highness the Aga Khan, was in attendance alongside other Trustees, including Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Professor Dr Syed Sohail H Naqvi, Rector Designate of UCA. During their visit, the Trustees toured UCA's Naryn Campus, met with students, faculty and staff, received presentations on undergraduate and co-curricular activities, and also toured UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Naryn. Additional meetings were conducted in Bishkek on April 14th, where the Board of Trustees familiarised themselves with UCA's research institutes and other programmes.

From L to R: Front Row: Princess Zahra Aga Khan, Mrs Elvira Sarieva, Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, and Dr Sharofat Mamadambarova. Back Row: Mr Naguib Kheraj, Professor Dr Syed Sohail H Naqvi, Professor Hans Hurni, Dr Shenggen Fan.
Kyrgyzstan Ranks Third Most Vulnerable to Climate Change Impacts in Central Asia

Recent climate resilience research has shown that Kyrgyzstan is the third most vulnerable to climate change impacts in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, primarily due to the sensitivity of its agricultural systems to climatic change. Since Kyrgyzstan’s land area is 90% mountainous, it is increasingly important to build resilience to these climate changes and to enable communities to continue thriving.

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute conducted household surveys in the Naryn, Bazar-Korgon and Batken regions using a new tool, which uses generalised and shock-specific subjective resilience measures to evaluate households, and take into account different contexts and demographics. This tool is an alternative to the traditional approach of choosing and evaluating household characteristics to measure its resilience. “It was tested during a household survey and the regression results show that it is a strong predictor of household food security,” said Abbie Clare, Researcher with the Pathways to Resilience in Semi-Arid Economies (PRISE) project at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Full story: English, Russian, MSRI brief on the study.

AKHP Signs 24th Academic Partnership Agreement in Almaty

UCA’s Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 19th with the Kazakh National Agrarian University (KazNAU) to enable AKHP to organise trainings and workshops at KazNAU. This agreement marks AKHP’s 24th MOU with educational institutions in Almaty. AKHP conducts Faculty Development Programme workshops for teachers, and Cross-Debate Format trainings for students at partner universities.

▲ From L to R: Dr Pulat Shozimov (seated), Acting Head of AKHP signs the agreement in the presence of KazNau staff, Zauresh Tastanova, Senior Lecturer, Dr Lazira Zaurbekova, Associate Professor, and Dr Bakyr Kalykova, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs.
Social Cohesion Through Community Based Development

UCA's Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) in partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) organised a workshop on April 24th to present the findings of the Social Cohesion through Community-Based Development project. The research covered an analysis of how community driven development projects can foster social cohesion, create an increased understanding of community life, and how additional activities can further connect various community groups to foster collaboration. Representatives of the government and public sector, development agencies, non-governmental organisations, academia and research institutions attended the workshop.

The project's intervention activities and research took place from 2014 to 2017 in Osh and Naryn regions of Kyrgyzstan. The project was funded by the World Bank and the Aga Khan Foundation. The intervention activities were carried out by the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme in Kyrgyzstan and the research was conducted by SIPRI and the UCA's IPPA.

Undergraduate Students Meet Employers for Co-op Programme

UCA's freshman students will begin their first Co-operative Education job placement this May. The Co-operative Education Programme is an innovative immersion initiative that creates opportunities for students to experience the working world, via structured job placements in three consecutive summers during their five-year university education. UCA organised an employer information session in Naryn on April 20th for undergraduate student to meet employers, network and practice their communications skills.

The University welcomed 20 representatives from 11 companies to the Naryn Campus, where they shared first-hand information about their organisations and available positions, and conducted formal and informal meetings with students. The represented companies included Bai Tushum Bank, Career Ambassador, El Group Consulting, First Microfinance Company, Good Neighbours, Next TV, Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, Spalmalo, Attractor Software, Private Entrepreneur, and UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute.
Afghanistan Government Delegation Visits UCA Khorog Campus

UCA welcomed a delegation from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan including Dr Mohammad Humayon Qayoumi, Chief Adviser to the President of Afghanistan to the Khorog Campus in Tajikistan on April 22nd. He was accompanied by his wife Mrs Najia Karim, as well as Chief Specialists, Mohammad Rahim Lang and Mohammad Akbar Rezai. Pamir Energy’s General Director, Daler Junaev, and Strategic Partnerships Manager, Farida Mamadaslamova were also present. The delegation toured the campus facilities, learned more about UCA following a presentation by Dr Kholiknazar Kuchakshoev, Associate Professor of Mathematics at UCA, and met with Afghan students.

Kazakh Delegation Visits UCA in Naryn

UCA welcomed the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, embassy officials and other Kazakh University representatives to the Naryn Campus and SPCE Naryn on April 27th. Amanbay Kayipov, Naryn Governor was also in attendance. The delegation toured the campus facilities, met undergraduate students, and learned about the Aga Khan Development Network and UCA from Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of UCA, and Dr Diana Pauna, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. At SPCE, the guests were introduced to SPCE’s activities, watched a mental math course demonstration, and met students. The visit was a productive opportunity to discuss future partnerships and collaboration.

From L to R: Hamid Khan, Senior Lecturer of English at UCA, Erbolat Bayuzakovich Saurykov, Rector of Taraz University of Innovation and Humanities, Aydar Abubakirovich Abildaev, Deputy Executive Secretary, M. H. Dulati Taraz State University, Nazym Tursynbayevna Duisenova, Head of the Center for Innovation in Education and International Cooperation of Taraz State Pedagogical University, Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Karim Nasbekovich Kokrekbaev, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Kyrgyz Republic, Dr Diana Pauna, and Asylbek Abdikarimov, Student Life Advisor at UCA.

Dr Diana Pauna welcomes the Kazakh Ambassador to the Naryn Campus alongside Amanbay Kayipov and Dr Shamsh Kassim-Lakha.

Kazakh representatives visit a mental math course demonstration at SPCE Naryn.
UCA Hosts Mental Maths Olympiad in Naryn

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) organised a mental math Olympiad for all SPCE mental math learners aged 6 to 16 years old in Naryn on April 28th. The Mental Math Olympiad is a competition where participants sit for a mathematics test and show different ways of solving arithmetical problems. Since 2016, 460 students have registered for mental math courses at SPCE Naryn, and 40 students are currently enrolled. This summer, the winners will apply to compete in the International mental math Olympiad in Dubai. Congratulations and good luck to the first-place winners in each level!

- Mariam Belekova (Level 1, 2)
- Adinai Toktosunova (Level 3)
- Deniza Mairambekova (Level 4), 9-12 years old
- Janel Satybekova (Level 4), 6-8 years old
- Aiya Baktybekova (Level 5, 6)
- Nurai Jeenbekova (Level 7)

UCA's SPCE held an English club for 22 learners (77% women) from SPCE and the Shughnan Teacher Training College at SPCE's Satellite Learning Centre in Shughnan, Afghanistan on April 18th, led by English Instructor, Qabilshah Arez.

Nurayim Nurgazieva (Grade 11) and Marat Bakishov (Grade 10) from UCA's SPCE Academic Achievement Programme (AAP) in Naryn won first place in their age category at a National American Song Contest. It was held in Bishkek and was organised by the United States Embassy. Congratulations! Watch their performances on UCA's Instagram.

Aigul Omuralieva, Librarian at UCA's SPCE Naryn organised a lecture on How to Prevent Tuberculosis for Grade 7 AAP learners. Nuraly uulu Nursanam, Head of the Monitoring Department and Aizada Askarova (pictured), Chief Specialist from the Tuberculosis Dispensary in Naryn delivered the lecture on April 19th.
06 | SPCE in Action

International Students Visit SPCE Conversation Clubs

▲ Eight international students from the United States, Brazil and Korea visited SPCE’s conversation clubs in Naryn. SPCE Grade 7 to 11 AAP students practiced their conversational English skills with the visitors. They introduced themselves, recited short dialogues, described photos and played games.

▲ Eight young Ethnic Kyrgyz from the Pamirs living in Naryn Town and Dr Louise Grogan, IPPA consultant from Bishkek, visited SPCE Naryn on April 12th. They learnt about SPCE activities and publications/textbooks, toured the facilities, and participated in a demo lesson for English and mental math.

▲ From L to R: Sabira Asanbekova and Aliya Malikova, SPCE staff, participated in the “In-Demand Skills for Young People” vacancies fair in April in Bishkek. They shared information about SPCE programmes and activities with potential SPCE learners. The fair was organised by the Education Coalition in Kyrgyzstan.

▲ SPCE Khorog held an English club on the Planet and the Environment for pre-intermediate and intermediate level learners led by English Instructor, Farangiz Amirshoeva.

▲ Mehrangez Navruzmadadova, SPCE English Instructor in Khorog held a speaking club on Healthy Eating for elementary and above level learners.

▲ SPCE Khorog organised an English speaking club on Culture for pre-intermediate and above level learners led by Instructor Bakhtibegim Mamadrayonova.
The Internal Audit department of UCA conducted an Internal Control Workshop on the nature, elements and application of internal controls in day-to-day work for Campus and SPCE staff in Naryn.

Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, Research Fellow at UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit conducted a workshop on "How to Conduct Qualitative Research to Study Music and Musical Culture" for the Rector and 17 graduate and postgraduate students of the National Conservatory of Tajikistan. It was the first seminar on research methods at the Conservatory.

Badakhshan has more than 80 varieties of medicinal herbs that are approved and recommended by modern medicine. UCA’s AKHP held a Public Lecture on Herbal Medicine by Shirinbek Davlatmamadov, Herbal Practitioner, Master-Category Surgeon and Member of the Association of Traditional Practitioners of the Republic of Tajikistan on April 28th. The lecture provided short descriptions of plants, their range of application, chemical compositions, medicinal properties, collection seasons, forms of administration (tincture, tea, or dried product), and side effects.

UCA held a master class on AKHP’s Cross Debate Format for 28 students from the University of International Business and other Almaty schools on April 26th in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

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PUBLICATIONS

UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) has published two new research papers in the IPPA Working Paper Series:


Working Paper #44: Kyrgyzstan’s Accession to the Eurasian Economic Union: Measuring Economy-Wide Impacts and Uncertainties by Roman Mogilevskii, James Thurlow, Adeline Yeh.
UCA hosted two ‘UCA Stories’ events in Naryn and Khorog on April 6 and March 31. The events “Celebrating our Lives” (Naryn), and “Reflect - Narrate - Inspire” (Khorog) aimed to identify exalting stories among people connected to UCA, and encourage conversations about topics that matter to the Naryn and Khorog communities.

In Naryn, Mubashir Ali Shah Artas, Sehar Naz Janani (Pakistan), Zarastin Kholbash (Tajikistan), and Karlygash Kussainova (Kazakhstan), undergraduate students, as well as Erik Krauss, UCA Manager of Academic Affairs shared their stories. In Khorog, the event was held at the Khorog State University (KSU). The speakers included Ian Canlas, UCA Senior Lecturer of Science, Jonbegim Mukhtar (Tajikistan), Yazan Ali Alshaar (Syria), UCA students, as well Sofiya Kudoberdieva, English Teacher at KSU and Zuhro Khudobandieva, KSU student. Concluding the event, students performed traditional dances from different countries. Read more.

First year Naryn State University (NSU) students and undergraduate students from UCA participated in Russian Culture Day on April 17th at NSU in Naryn. Participants learnt about Russian customs and traditions, tasted Russian pancakes, pies and meat dumplings and listened to Russian carols. UCA’s students also demonstrated their interest in Russian culture. UCA students, Karlygash Kussainova read an excerpt from Evgeni Onegin by A. S. Pushkin, Firuza Muzzafar recited some poems by Esenin, and Zarastin Kholbash delivered other readings. Participants concluded the event by singing Russian songs and couplets (chastushki).

UCA Students Guests of Honour at Russian Culture Day Celebration
Eight UCA undergraduate students and two faculty/staff members participated in the Jaz Demi Spring half-marathon in Bishkek on April 8th. The UCA team members came from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan, and competed in the 5, 10 and 21 km categories.

Dr Trevor Davis, UCA Senior Lecturer of Mathematics delivered a lecture on "Gravitational Waves from a Spherically Symmetric Core Collapse in Scalar-Tensor Field Theories". It was organised on April 20th as part of the Faculty Research Lecture series in Khorog.

UCA students in Khorog competed in a Chess tournament at the Khorog Campus on April 14th. Boqir from Tajikistan (left), Mamadnazr from Tajikistan (right) and Safdar from Pakistan won first, second and third place respectively. Congratulations!

UCA undergraduate students and faculty went hiking in the At-Bashy area in Naryn.

UCA students and staff, and American Space Khorog volunteers celebrated Earth Day on April 22nd and organised a community clean-up (subotnik) in the Victory Park and Botanical Garden in Khorog.

Dr Louise Grogan, IPPA Consultant at UCA delivered a guest lecture to UCA undergraduate students at the Naryn Campus on "Using Survey Data to Inform Policy in Central Asia".

UCA students from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Syria celebrated Syrian Independence Day on April 17th in Khorog.

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Student-designed Robots Perform in Khorog

Ten teams competed in a robot tournament organised for UCA students at the Khorog Campus. The students created their own design using LEGO blocks, and programmed the Robots to perform tasks using their cellphones. The “Terminators” and “X” teams won the first and second rounds. Following the tournament, UCA students from three teams also presented their robot projects at the Aga Khan Lycee Science Fair.

Community Volunteering

UCA students in Khorog led a children’s play group for kids aged 3 to 6 years at the campus. They taught basic English and led creativity activities as part of their community service initiatives. On Sunday April 22nd, students participated in a final session, where the kids shared what they have learnt. These sessions have been regularly conducted over the past six months. Well done!
Undergraduate students held their second English Language Learning Programme (ELLP) class at the UCA Naryn Campus. Students from the Naryn community participated in the programme led by UCA students on April 7th. The ELLP curriculum is developed by Dr Roza Kazakbaeva, Associate Professor of English for Academic Purposes at UCA.

▲ UCA undergraduate students and faculty organised a community clean up (subotnik) at the Naryn Botanical Garden in April. This event was organised as part of the ‘Razakar’ student volunteering initiative. Following the event, an agreement was signed between Razakar and the botanical garden team for the environmental department to continue to take care of the plants and assist with plantation.

▲ UCA students conducted a beginner’s English course for students from the Dasht community, as part of an ongoing community service project. The sessions were led by UCA students, and the course curriculum was developed with Meredith Bishop, English faculty at UCA. Participants celebrated their progress at the concluding event in April.

▲ UCA students led English and maths classes for Grade 9 and 10 students, and organised activities for youth from Rushon Orphanage in Khorog. Robin Higgins, Campus Counsellor, also conducted a session for the dormitory caretakers of the orphanage, and Shams Sharif, English faculty held a session with their English teacher.

▲ UCA students organised a workshop on Communication Skills for 16 students and 1 instructor from Vocational School #87. Aisha Nugmanova and Milena Melnikova, UCA undergraduate students from Kazakhstan, led the session in April. They covered the importance of emotions, eye contact, and body language through interesting games and other activities to demonstrate how to apply these skills to their life.

‘Razakar’ provides UCA students a platform to apply their skills and serve the community around them in areas of academics, life skills, and the environment.
The UCA’s Student Association (UCASA) in Khorog launched a community service project aimed at providing financial assistance to gifted students to take an English course at UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Khorog. UCASA conducted interviews for the top 20 students of 60 applicants on April 14th.

Ten students from Grade 9 from School #11, 12, and 14 in Khorog were selected as finalists and received a scholarship to study English at UCA’s SPCE on April 21st. The Serena Inn, Moik Alisher, Organization for Educational Change, UCA and other individual donors funded this student-led initiative.

SPCE Scholarships Awarded in Khorog

Aga Khan Foundation Canada: 1 Million Lives Unlocked

The Aga Khan Foundation Canada hosted a 'One Million Lives' event in Vancouver to celebrate the impact that Canada has had on reducing global poverty. The event featured a photo exhibit reflecting projects supported by Canada, including UCA. The University has several academic partners including Seneca College (Preparatory Programme), the University of Toronto, (Computer Science), the University of British Columbia (Earth and Environmental Sciences) and the University of Victoria (Cooperative Education Programme).

Held in April, it included engaging speakers, and thought-provoking conversations on how Canadians are building a more equal and prosperous future where everyone can reach their full potential.
Naryn, April 18th: Representatives from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in the Kyrgyz Republic led by Kimberley A. Rosen, Mission Director visited the UCA Naryn Campus. The visitors were introduced to UCA’s School of Arts and Sciences, offered study programmes, and gained insights about student life at a joint dinner meeting with students. The USAID representatives shared information about their projects, and discussed potential future partnership’s with UCA’s cooperative education programme.

Khorog, April 27th: Representatives from the Swiss Development Cooperation visit UCA to discuss a Climate Change conference collaboration, anticipated in September 2018.

Naryn, April 6th: Yoshihiro Yamamura (centre), Japanese Ambassador, and Yuri Nakagawa (right), Second Secretary (Development Cooperation) receive a campus tour by Alyna Rahim (left), undergraduate student from Pakistan.

Khorog, April 11th: Dr Michale Lightfoot (left), Team leader of the European Union Funded Quality Education Support Program in Tajikistan met with students following a campus tour.
Save the Date! World Mountain Forum 2018: ‘Mountains in a Changing World’

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute is pleased to announce the World Mountain Forum 2018, to be held in Bishkek, October 23rd to 26th. The Forum, Mountains in a Changing World: Strengthening Partnerships and Pathways towards a Thriving Mountain Future, will be hosted by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, with the support from the Government of Switzerland, UCA, and the Aga Khan Foundation.

The WMF is bringing together the global Sustainable Mountain Development community, and enabling strategic and timely dialogue on some of the most pertinent development challenges. The forum will strive to identify and develop solutions for mountain areas globally, but with a special emphasis this year on the mountains of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.

More info:
Email WMF2018@ucentralasia.org

Applied Research Design for Beginners

UCA’s IPPA has opened applications for a training programme in Applied Research Design for Beginners for prospective candidates. The programme commences on May 21st 2018 at UCA in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, and is targeted towards independent analysts and staff at think tanks, civil servants, and non-governmental organisations who wish to acquire applied research skills. This course will teach learners the basics of designing applied research projects. Click here for more information (Link to announcement), or to apply by May 17th (Link to application form).

Call for Papers and Sessions: Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference

In collaboration with ISDC - International Security and Development Center, and the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops (IGZ), UCA’s IPPA is pleased to announce the forth annual 'Life in Kyrgyzstan' Conference to take place in Bishkek on October 17th and 18th 2018. Those interested in submitting sessions or papers to the conference are welcome to submit their applications by June 30th. Registration for participation will close on September 15th. Full details (English, Russian).