Prince Aly Muhammad visits Naryn Campus

Prince Aly Muhammad Aga Khan completed a five-day, private visit to Kyrgyzstan in November, during which he also visited the Naryn campus of the University of Central Asia (UCA). He spent time with students in Naryn to understand more about their backgrounds and aspirations. “I was deeply inspired by the students and faculty I met during this trip. Getting to know so many talented students and learning more about UCA’s mission has been exciting and deeply rewarding.”

As part of his ongoing work this year on his first film, Close to Home, he said, “I plan to continue adding to the Close to Home series, in the hope that these films will help shed light on issues that I believe are important to young people today.”

UCA and Chinese Academy of Sciences Partner on the Environment

UCA and the Regional Centre for Ecology and Environment in Central Asia (RCEECA) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) signed a letter of intent on November 14 in Bishkek, recognising many areas of mutual interest and potential synergies across a wide range of topics pertaining to environmental resources and development.

Continued on page 2

Dr. Xi Chen (left), Director of the Research Center for Ecology and Environment of Central Asia, CAS, and Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, UCA’s Rector, signing the agreement. Standing L to R: Dr. Prof. Wenjiang Liu, Executive Deputy Director, RCEECA, CAS, Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman, UCA Board of Trustees, and Dr. Bohdan Krawchenko, Dean of the Graduate School of Development at UCA.
Canadian Universities Honour UCA Chancellor

His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of UCA, received three honorary Doctor of Laws degrees in October from Canadian universities: University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the University of Calgary (UCalgary). The awards recognised His Highness’ lifetime achievements in philanthropy and contributions to humanity.

UBC and SFU recognised His Highness in an unprecedented and historic joint conferral ceremony in Vancouver. UCalgary announced that such an honour is “bestowed upon individuals whose notable achievements and community service merit recognition, and is the university’s highest academic honour.” His Highness is also Chancellor of the Aga Khan University (AKU).

Open Doors Event in Khorog Hosts over 4,900 visitors from Badakhshan Region

UCA welcomed over 4,900 guests to the Khorog Campus from the Khorog community and surrounding districts on November 10 and 11. Guests toured the campus facilities and met UCA students who also conducted tours (photo).

“UCA is extremely important for the future of our children. I encourage students to upgrade their knowledge and apply to this university. Everything that a student needs is provided at UCA,” said Saidvali Saidkhomushov, a resident of Shugnan district, at the Open Doors event. Watch a video report in Tajik by Badakhshan TV.

UCA and Chinese Academy of Sciences Partnership

With RCEECA’s national offices and field stations in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and beyond, this new partnership with UCA will enable the development of timely collaborations on integrated disaster risk reduction, natural resources management, mountain ecosystems, climate change and adaptation, and other priority issues relevant for sustainable mountain development and promoting the well-being of mountain societies in Central Asia. UCA and RCEECA plan to cooperate through teaching and research programmes, such as joint research activities, publications, and postgraduate training, exchange of faculty, and co-organising seminars.

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute conducts research to enhance the resilience and quality of life of mountain societies and is committed to advancing the global Sustainable Mountain Development agenda through transformative research, education, and dissemination of findings. Similarly, RCEECA aims to enhance environmental monitoring and early warning systems as well as conduct research on natural resources and coping mechanisms in light of environmental changes.

Did You Know?

UCA News ▪ December 2018

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News

Development Dialogue Tackles Food Security and Nutrition in Kyrgyzstan

Government representatives, development partners and experts gathered in Bishkek on November 23 to share inputs on food security and nutrition in Kyrgyzstan. The half-day Development Dialogue, “Food Security and Nutrition in Kyrgyzstan – Trends, Challenges and the Next Steps”, was co-organised by the United Nations (UN) system in Kyrgyzstan, and UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA).

The Development Dialogue on food security and nutrition comes amid discussions around the draft National Food Security and Nutrition Programme for 2018-2023, developed by the Kyrgyz Government in September 2018. Participants, including high level government representatives, parliamentarians, development partners, researchers, experts and civil society representatives shared inputs on current challenges in food security in Kyrgyzstan, the draft programme on food security and nutrition, recommendations for policy development, and regional nutritional capacity development.

“Since the beginning of the century, food security and nutrition situation has improved, however, the nutrition structure needs further improvement towards a more balanced content,” said Dr. Kanat Tilekeyev, Senior Research Fellow at UCA’s IPPA, during his presentation.

“State service functions in agriculture need to be strengthened, rather than market interventions; and local farmers should be prioritised in strategic programmes as main food producers.”

The UN-UCA Development Dialogue Series will comprise of six dialogues, organised over the course of one year, to initiate consultation among government, development partners, civil society, private sector and academia on critical development subjects. The objective is to help break down traditional sector silos and enhance horizontal and vertical policy coherence, integration, and partnerships to inform policy formulation in Kyrgyzstan. Each dialogue is designed to include presentations of thematic issues by key stakeholders, as well as a Q&A session, and will be published as a thematic policy brief.

Read more in English, Russian, or Kyrgyz.

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in Khorog

UCA’s Student Health Council organised a “Festival of Healthy Living” at the Khorog Campus on November 4. Around 500 people from the Khorog community attended the Festival. Doctors from the Khorog Health Center provided health screenings on nutrition, optometry, diabetes, dentistry, oncology, and traditional medicine to the visitors. Guests had an opportunity to buy fruit, healthy juices, and were involved in playing games and activities related to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Special booths for face painting and drawing were also organised for children.

Watch a video report in Tajik by Badakhshan TV.
Dr Kholiknazar Kuchakshoev, Associate Professor of Mathematics at UCA and Dr Genevieve Balderston (pictured), Assistant Professor in English for Academic Purposes at UCA, conducted English and math workshops for Khorog State University (KSU) students on November 16. It was organised as part of the Heptagon project, led by Dr. Kuchakshoev and Dr. Balderston, aimed at improving the quality of math and English teaching in rural areas of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. Targeting junior level KSU students, it will also assist in developing future teachers in Khorog and its surrounding districts and villages, including potential UCA faculty members. The project curriculum includes an educational internship where students will observe and practice teaching, develop lesson plans, and learn about teaching methodology and activities.

Currently there are several institutions and schools that teach English in Khorog, however, there is no central organisation that serves as a hub to allow teachers to network and share ideas. UCA’s English Faculty, Tojiniso Olimnazarova (pictured) and Meredith Bishop, plan to establish a Khorog English Teachers’ Association (KETA) based at UCA’s Khorog Campus. The aim of KETA is to support English teachers professionally by providing opportunities for networking with other English language professionals in Khorog.

UCA undergraduate students from the academic department of Razakar, a volunteer public service student initiative, organised a math tournament for Grade 10-11 students at the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Naryn on November 25. Over 50 students participated from different schools of Naryn.

The tournament's objective was to identify talented students of Naryn schools and award the top three winners with 5,000 Kyrgyz soms and certificates of recognition. The winners include Nurmuhammedali Omuraliev (1st place), Emilia Kadyrova (2nd place) and Sanjar Urmatbekov (3rd place).
Continuing Education

Over 200 Graduate from SPCE Programmes in Faizabad

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) held a graduation ceremony on November 5 for 234 students from its Continuing Education Unit in Faizabad, Afghanistan, established in partnership with Badakhshan University. Students received certificates for conversational English, Information Technology, and Cashier programmes. Representatives from the Afghan government, non-governmental organisations and Aga Khan Development Network agencies attended the ceremony.

“UCA programmes are enabling students to gain new computer skills, improve their English, and find jobs. I really admire the existence of this centre in Badakhshan and hope to see SPCE’s programmes continue to expand into other districts of Badakhshan,” said Talabulddin Qadiri, Deputy and member of the local council in Badakhshan district.

SPCE launched an Office Assistant Programme for participants from Shugnan and Ishkashim. The 3-month programme aims to provide essential tools to vulnerable women, who have graduated from post-secondary education, to pursue a variety of employment options.

The curriculum is based on SPCE’s learning centre in Faizabad. It is funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands in partnership with Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan under Afghanistan’s Community-Led Economic Stability Project.

Professional Development in Tourism

UCA’s SPCE in Kazakhstan organised a seminar and training for employees, professionals, and government officials working in the field of tourism in the Almaty region. The training covered an assessment of the tourism sector, management and organisation of tourist activities, the implementation and monitoring of tourism projects, as well as practical and theoretical knowledge of the tourist market.

The sessions on November 20-23 were conducted in Taldykorgan and Tekeli in partnership with the Department of Tourism.
Over 75 parents of UCA’s undergraduate students visited the Naryn and Khorog campuses for “Parents Day” on November 24. It was an opportunity for them to interact with faculty and staff and experience a day at the UCA campus. Through a series of sessions, parents learnt more about the undergraduate programme structure, teaching methods, academic life, and the Co-operative Education programme. UCA students also organised a variety of games, sports activities, and hosted an evening dinner and concert for their parents to share their University experience. The events hosted parents from different parts of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

“We now know much more about what student life is like at UCA, and I am most impressed. My two daughters are studying at UCA, one in Naryn and the other in Khorog, and I am very happy about it,” said Sharifa Khudoyorova.

UCA’s preparatory, freshmen, and sophomore students, as well as faculty and operations staff, competed in a volleyball tournament at the Khorog campus. Freshmen students won the tournament. UCA’s operations team placed second, followed by the faculty in third position.

The tournament was held over 3 days, and was organised by representatives of UCA’s Student Association. Well done to all participants.
Agricultural Production in GBAO

In November, Sebastian Kussmann from UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute, conducted a series of workshops for UCA undergraduate students to provide an introduction to the structures and functioning of food systems, including the concepts of food security and sovereignty. Discussion topics included food production, processing, supply chains and consumption. Also highlighted were examples of local agricultural production and its changes in GBAO during the last decade, as well as social-economic, cultural and political conditions. Concluding the workshop, students delivered presentations on their learnings.

UCA Students Visit Naryn TV

Undergraduate students studying the Kyrgyz language at UCA visited Naryn TV on November 15. The aim of the trip was to learn about Naryn TV’s history, work, and the process of preparing materials for TV broadcasting. Naryn TV representatives, Bolokbai Sherimbekov, Programme Coordinator, and Sairagul Kasymova, Reporter/Reviewer, answered questions and discussed possible future collaboration with UCA students studying Communications and Media specialisation. The students also had an opportunity to practice their Kyrgyz language skills.

Celebrating Kyrgyz Language and Literature

UCA students, faculty and staff celebrated Kyrgyz language day and commemorated the life and achievements of Chyngyz Aitmatov (1928-2008) at the Naryn Campus on November 28-29. Chyngyz Aitmatov was a famous soviet and Kyrgyz author, born 90 years ago. During the two-day event, Mr. Melis Muratalieev (pictured) from the Bakdoolot company in Bishkek, and Mr. Adilet Zhaantaev from Naryn State University (NSU) delivered public lectures on Kyrgyz civilizations and Chyngyz Aitmatov’s work. The event also hosted a Kyrgyz food and drink exhibition, as well as performance in Kyrgyz by UCA students, including recitations of Kyrgyz poems in Russian, Kazakh and English.

Learning about Cultural Landscapes

Freshmen students, faculty members from the Khorog Campus and the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences met with local musicians and singers in the Pamiri House on November 26 in Dasht village in Khorog. It was organised as part of a course on Cultural Landscapes led by Dr. Chorshanbe Golbnazarov, Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies at UCA. The musical group Samo, led by Shanbe Mamadgaminov, conducted a master class for the students about the musical culture of Badakhshan. They performed various genres of music and dance as well as talked about the importance of musical instruments in everyday life of the people in the Pamirs. During the class, students danced, sang, and asked questions about the musical life and cultural practices in Badakhshan.
Identifying or being identified as a Muslim minority in a secular welfare state, presents particular challenges for Muslim youth. UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) hosted a Public Lecture on November 14 in Bishkek on “Young Muslims Negotiating Muslim Identities in Scandinavia.” It was delivered by Professor Jonas Otterbeck from the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations of the Aga Khan University in the United Kingdom. It addressed the experiences of young Muslim adults living in Scandinavia and discussed how they understand and negotiate Islam in relation to their families, friends, and society's expectations. Professor Otterbeck has researched the situation of Muslim youth since 1993 and draws from his interview-based research of young adults in Malmö (Sweden) and Copenhagen (Denmark).

UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) organised a public lecture on “Promoting Economic Growth and Resilience in Europe and Central Asia.” It was delivered by Mr. David Michael Gould from the Macro Economics and Fiscal Management Department at the World Bank in Kyrgyzstan. The presentation provided insights into how trade, investment, migration, and other linkages among countries drive economic growth in Europe and the Central Asian region.

UCA is pleased to announce that undergraduate applications are now open for the 2019-2020 academic year. Currently offering four major specialisations, students can study at UCA Campuses in Naryn (Kyrgyzstan) or Khorog (Tajikistan) depending on their selected area of study: Communications & Media, Computer Science (Naryn), Earth & Environmental Sciences, Economics (Khorog). Learn more about how to apply, financial aid and more.