While in Naryn to attend the International Investment Forum on June 28th, the Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Altynai Omurbekova, also visited the University of Central Asia. After a presentation and tour, she was complimentary about the design and facilities on campus. “The students are fortunate to have such nice facilities at UCA. Makes me wish I was a student again.” She added, “I am particularly impressed that UCA, as a regional university, is serving the higher education and research needs of Central Asia.”

**Vice Prime Minister Visits Naryn Campus**

Altynai Omurbekova (right), Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, enjoying the scenery from the terrace of the faculty lounge at UCA’s campus in Naryn. The Governor of Naryn is third from right

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**SPCE Student Takes Top Honours in Mental Math Competition in Dubai**

Ten-year-old Amina Orozobekova was born in Naryn town and enrolled in mental math courses at the University of Central Asia’s (UCA) School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in December 2017. Six months later, in June 2018, she won first place at the International Mental Arithmetic Competition in Dubai. Organised by the Global Association of Mental Arithmetic, she competed with 200 youth from 15 countries including the United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Turkey, Malaysia, Philippines, India, Thailand, Japan and China. Amina was one of 80 participants from Kyrgyzstan, and the only representative from the Naryn Oblast. “The knowledge I gained at SPCE helped me to win first place.” said Amina. “My thanks to my mental math instructor, Nurgul Gazbekovna, and to SPCE.”

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Amina with her trophies.
VIP Visits to UCA

June 6th: Nineteen Naryn City Council Deputies visited UCA’s campus in Naryn to learn about the programmes, and strengthen cooperation between UCA and the Council. Mr Zhyrgalbek Botakanov, Chairman of the Naryn City Council, expressed gratitude for the opportunity on behalf of all the Deputies. “We have been very impressed with UCA, and our visit will help us answer questions from the Naryn community,” said Aibek Askarbekov, from the Naryn City Council.

June 21st: Kamolzoda Ilhom (left), Head of the International Relations Department of the Ministry of Education and Science, and Eraj Mirzoshirinov, Head of the Education Department of GBAO in Tajikistan, toured the Khorog campus facilities. Ilhom noted that the Campus facilities foster a unique and high-quality learning environment for students. “I will pass on my good impressions and overall delight about UCA’s campus to the Ministry.”

Applied Research for Beginners

UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) conducted a two-week course on applied research design for 37 participants in Bishkek. It taught learners the basics of designing applied research projects, and was targeted towards independent analysts and staff at think-tanks, civil servants, and non-governmental organisations who wish to acquire applied research skills. In contrast to academic or fundamental research, that seeks to answer universal questions, the job of applied researchers is to generate answers using sound evidence and logic to solve specific down-to-earth problems.

The course was taught by Mahabat Baimyrzaeva (centre in photo), Associate Professor of Management and Policy at Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California. Course participants came from a broad cross section of organisations, such as the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, Academy of Public Administration under the President of Kyrgyz Republic, International Ala Too University, The World Bank, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

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Amina’s father, Nurlan Orozobekovich Junushov, who works at UCA’s Naryn Campus, was overjoyed. “My daughter did her best, and placed first among all participants. I am a great admirer of SPCE’s programmes and plan to encourage other parents to send their children to SPCE. I also want to share my appreciation for all UCA is doing in the region and Naryn town community.”

Amina completed Grade 3 this year at the V.P. Chkalov School #2, and plans to continue her studies at SPCE. After completing 4 levels, she hopes to pursue 5 more to receive a “Super Champion” nomination for mental math.

Amina celebrates with her father in Dubai.
SPCE Holds Graduations in Tekeli, Naryn and Khorog
Over 150 graduates recognised at SPCE graduations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

KAZAKHSTAN

May 30th: SPCE in Tekeli recognised the academic accomplishments of 24 graduates receiving certificates in Accounting Technology, Conversational English, and Academic Achievement programmes. “We have ambitious goals and look forward to involving more students in our programmes and projects” said Bakytzhan Sametayev, Manager of Academic Affairs SPCE in Tekeli.

KYRGYZSTAN

June 8th: SPCE in Naryn awarded certificates to 90 graduates (70% women) at its fifth graduation ceremony. “For 11 years, UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education has made a significant contribution to the regional development and education sphere in Naryn,” said Jarkyn Ibraeva, Deputy Governor of Social Affairs of Naryn Oblast. “The School is providing a great opportunity to the young generation, and assisting them to realise their potential and educational goals.”

Among the graduates were eight healthcare practitioners in Naryn, who completed the “English for Health” course to enable them to communicate more effectively with their patients. They work at the local regional hospital and the Aga Khan Medical and Diagnostic Center in Naryn. SPCE students in Naryn also completed courses in English, Russian, mental math, information technology, accounting technology, the ORT exam preparation course (held in At-Bashy and Naryn), and the Academic Achievement Programme. The Ceremony was attended by representatives from the Naryn Government, Naryn town Education Department, Naryn State University, as well as from the Aga Khan Development Network agencies.

TAJIKSTAN

June 26th: SPCE in Khorog presented certificates to 37 Academic Achievement Programme (AAP) graduates. AAP students began the 5-year programme at SPCE in Grade 7 in 2013, and studied English, information technology and math.

“We are proud to see SPCE graduates successfully complete the AAP programme. Most have already been accepted to international universities. Today over 300 schoolchildren are enrolled at SPCE Khorog, and their programmes should be expanded to other schools,” said Eraj Jonmirzoev Head of Regional Education Department of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).

“We are confident that these students will continue their education, and we hope that in the near future they will provide valuable services to their families, their communities and the country,” said Dilovar Butabekov, Deputy Director of SPCE.
SPCE Students Showcase Math Skills in Kyrgyzstan

Issyk-Kul was the site of the fourth International Mental Arithmetic Competition. On June 14th, there was much excitement as 500 students started arriving from eight countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Lebanon and India. Nine mental math students from UCA participated from Naryn, Khorog and Dushanbe.

Adinai Toktosunova, ten-year-old student at SPCE in Naryn, received a “Super Champion” medal and cup in Level 7 (holding UCA flag, 4th from left), while Deniza Mairambekova (holding the UCA flag, 3rd from left) won a 3rd place medal in Level 6. From Tajikistan, eight-year-old Dovud Imomnazarov (with cup in photo), who has been learning mental math at SPCE in Dushanbe since October 2017, received a “Champion” medal.

SPCE Kyrgyzstan was also awarded with a plaque for being a “Respectable Partner”, and Samarat Mambetajieva, Manager of Academic Affairs at SPCE Naryn received a Certificate of Appreciation for the best teaching of mental math in Naryn.

The competition recognised talented students from 4 to 16 years of age, and united schools for further development of mental math. It was organised by the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan, the Academia Rosta Intellectual Development Center, and the Askar Salymbekov Fund.

SPCE Students Receive Gold Certificates in University Entrance Exam

The Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan conducts a mandatory National University Entrance (ORT) exam each year in May for all secondary school graduates in the country. In 2018, two students who enrolled in SPCE’s ORT preparation course received gold certificates. Myrzayim Temirbekova (scored 221/245) from Kazybek village, and Ainazik Konogalieva (scored 220/245) from Kyzyl-Tuu village in the At-Bashy district received their certificates from Sooronbay Jeenbekov, President of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek.

The exams covered mathematics, reading, writing, grammar and comprehension of Russian or Kyrgyz. Since 2009, SPCE has been conducting ORT exam preparation courses for over 4,500 learners in Naryn town and neighbouring villages.
Promoting Entrepreneurship in Khorog

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) conducted an exposure visit for its Small & Medium Business Management (SMBM) programme students in Khorog to the “Zari Pamir” stones processing company and “Shiri Kuhiston” dairy manufacturing company, which have been in operation since 2013. The visits were organised to compliment the SMBM programme modules on cost calculation, production technology, and business strategy development.

Zarangez Mazabshoeva, who manages “Zari Pamir” and is also a student in the SMBM course at SPCE, described how the company uses local resources for its stone processing. At “Shiri Kuhiston”, students learnt about dairy production – starting from the delivery of raw materials and production process, to storage and distribution. The SMBM programme was designed to strengthen the business models of current and future entrepreneurs who are seeking to establish, expand, or strengthen a business. It is funded by the United States Agency for International Development and the Aga Khan Foundation, USA.

AKHP Holds Training of Trainers in Tajikistan

UCA’s Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) held a workshop on an Introduction to Field Research for 14 AKHP trainers from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. AKHP Debate Club leaders also participated in the workshop which was held in Dushanbe. It was led by Cathy Raymond, Fulbright TEFL Scholar, and Marifat Alifbekova, AKHP Humanities Fellow.

▲ Workers at the “Zari Pamir” company demonstrate the stones processing process.
▲ SMBM students learnt about the “Shiri Kuhiston” dairy manufacturing company in Khorog.

▲ Cathy Raymond (left), Fulbright TEFL Scholar, received a certificate of appreciation from Dr Pulat Shozimov, Acting Head of AKHP.
▲ Fourteen trainers and debate club leaders learnt about field research in Dushanbe.
‘Climate and Water Dialogue’ Forum

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) joined other partners to organise a ‘Climate and Water Dialogue’ forum on June 19th in Dushanbe. It aimed to identify climate impacts on water security, mitigation and adaptation policies, and how to enhance water and climate dialogues at various levels. The forum also provided a platform to share knowledge, best practices, and ideas on sustainable water management in the context of climate change. It was attended by more than 100 professionals, including government officials, representatives of academia, international organisations, development agencies, civil society and youth. It was organised by the United Nations (UN) Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization office in Almaty, the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of Tajikistan, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Mountain Partnership and the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation.

The forum was held as a pre-conference event for the international conference on the International Decade “Water for Sustainable Development” held on June 20th and 21st in Dushanbe. The forum participants agreed that it is crucial to promote research and capacity development activities on the science-policy interface and education in the region. The objective is to foster dialogue and networking among scientists, policy makers and practitioners in the field of climate and water.

World Mountain Forum

Mountain Partnership members in Central Asia participated in a meeting with UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute in Bishkek, to discuss potential collaboration for the upcoming World Mountain Forum (WMF). The main themes for the forum are Climate Change, Water and Energy, Poverty, Food Systems, and Agrobiodiversity, Resilience and Transformation of Mountain Socio-Ecological Systems and Investing in Mountains - Enabling the Future. WMF will be held on October 23-26 in Bishkek. It is the fourth in a series of WMF events, organised with support from the Government of Switzerland, the Aga Khan Foundation and UCA. The Government of Kyrgyzstan is hosting the event.

PUBLICATION

New Research Paper on Forced Marriages in Kyrgyzstan

Working Paper #45: How Forced Marriages Differ: Evidence on Assortative Mating in Kyrgyzstani Marriages by Charles M. Becker and Susan Steiner. This paper provides a novel source of evidence on the non-consensual nature of bride capture in Kyrgyzstan, adding further weight to those arguing that it is damaging in many aspects to women. The paper is available for free by download from the UCA website.
June 13th, Bishkek: Household Surveys New Techniques and Methodologies, by Diane Steele and Saida Ismailakhunova, Economists at the World Bank. The lecture provided insights into the current recommendations for collecting data in household surveys to monitor and measure household well-being. The increasing demands for information, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, and the increasing needs for analyses at more dis-aggregated levels, have led to larger data collection efforts in terms of questionnaires and sample sizes. It also offered ideas on topics included in household surveys regarding how best to collect quality data and methodologies that are being used to reduce the burden on respondents.

May 31st, Khorog: Impact of Climate Change on the Agricultural Ecosystems of the Pamirs, by Kuvvatbek Odilbekov, Deputy Director for Academic Affairs of the H. Yusufbekov Pamir Biological Institute under the Academy of Science of the Republic of Tajikistan. The lecture presented the extreme factors that significantly impact the biodiversity of the Pamirs, including dryness of air, high exposure to the sun, and low temperatures with sharp 24-hour fluctuations. It also highlighted that the high altitude and extreme aridity in the Pamirs is affecting the survival of plants. All these aspects along with man-made factors and climate change significantly impact the high-mountain ecosystems and biodiversity of the region.

June 1st, Bishkek: AKDN Quality of Life Unit: An Overview, by Marc Theuss (left in photo), Director of AKDN’s Quality of Life (QoL) Unit. The presentation described AKDN’s QoL Unit Strategic Plan (2018-2020), key priorities and ongoing areas of work, an overview of QoL Unit’s changing approach to prioritisation with regard to QoL Assessments, and presented a new approach to measuring QoL outside AKDN’s Multi-Input Area Development (MIAD) areas. It communicated the Unit’s increased focus on communication and engagement, as well as conveyed the importance of partnership between QoL Unit, UCA and other AKDN agencies. The session also provided an opportunity for dialogue between AKDN QoL Unit and UCA with regard to possible future collaborations.

June 22nd, Bishkek: The Problems of Religious Illiteracy and their Solutions by Shiraz Hajiani, U.S. Fulbright Researcher in Tajikistan. This lecture examined the global problem of religious illiteracy, some of its causes and dangerous consequences. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, increasing levels of religious extremism aligned with certain political ideologies, pose serious threats to communities and societies around the world. Hajiani discussed different approaches that could be taken by individuals and organisations to nurture pluralistic engagements in society. It also suggested approaches to develop responses to the problems of religious illiteracy, and to foster more inclusive and peaceful communities.
UCA Students at Central Asian Youth Network

UCA undergraduate students, Suyuna Dadybaeva, Zarrina Gafyrova, Murodali Sharipov, Manuchekhr Maksutshoev, and Adelina Almazo-va represented UCA at the Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN) Innovating Central Asia seminar in Almaty on June 26-28. Nearly 30 youth participated from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. They discussed the challenges of current regional security threats, and presented solutions to development issues in Central Asia.

UCA student, Suyuna (2nd from left), was also recognised for submitting the best essay from over 400 applications to the seminar. Her essay analysed the essential preconditions for Central Asian innovations to emerge. The seminar was organised by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

World Mountain Forum: Registration Now Open & Call for Contributions

The University of Central Asia's Mountain Societies Research Institute is pleased to announce that registration is now open for the World Mountain Forum (WMF) 2018, to be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, October 23rd to 26th. To contribute to the discussion, UCA invites the submission of contributions addressing one of four core themes of the Forum.

The deadline to register and submit contributions is Sunday July 29th 2018 at 11:59 pm (GMT+6)

Core Themes:
1. Climate Change Affecting Water and Energy in Mountain Areas
2. Poverty, Food Systems and Agrobiodiversity
3. Resilience and Transformation in Mountain Communities and Ecosystems
4. Investing in Mountains - Securing the Future

This Forum is the fourth in a series of WMF events, and will be hosted by the Government of Kyrgyzstan, with the support from the Government of Switzerland, the University of Central Asia, and the Aga Khan Foundation. Learn more.