UCA to Collaborate with High Technology Park

The University of Central Asia (UCA) and the High Technology Park (HTP) of the Kyrgyz Republic signed a memorandum of understanding on April 29th to collaborate in the spheres of Information Technology (IT) and entrepreneurship.

This includes the joint-development of roundtables, seminars, conferences and training programmes related to IT. HTP would also provide internships for UCA undergraduate students as part of the cooperative education programme, and the development of support programmes to benefit entrepreneurs.

In addition, UCA and HTP plan to support computer science programmes of local universities, as well as collaborate in providing UCA students and researchers opportunities to gain insight on the IT sphere from local companies.

Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha Receives Naryn Citizenship

In recognition of the significant contribution made by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) to the social and economic development of Naryn, Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Diplomatic Representative of AKDN in the Kyrgyz Republic, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of UCA, was conferred an Honorary Citizenship of Naryn Oblast and Naryn Town at a Tenir Too Forum in Bishkek on April 30th. Over 250 guests participated, including Members of Parliament, Government officials, civil society, business leaders and artists from the Naryn Oblast.

While acknowledging these awards Dr. Kassim-Lakha said, "I am humbled by this honour and express my sincere appreciation to the leaders and people of Naryn. These tributes recognize the vision of His Highness the Aga Khan in fostering the social and economic development of mountain communities and the region more broadly through the collective efforts of Government, civil society, and other development actors. The accolades I have received today also reflect the immense effort and team work by my colleagues at UCA and all other agencies of AKDN". Read more.
Open Government Forum on Business and Investment Climate Co-Organised by UCA

UCA's Graduate School of Development jointly with the Council on Development of Business and Investments of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Secretariat of Open Government organised a forum on how the Open Government Partnership (OGP) can enable an improved business and investment environment in Kyrgyzstan. It was attended by representatives of state ministries, business associations and experts. The discussions also highlighted the obligations of the National Action Plan (NAP), which are designed to improve the business environment and investment climate in Kyrgyzstan. These commitments include public hearings on NAP projects, engaging citizens in fighting corruption in government agencies, increasing the transparency of government procurement, disclosing data about the assets of state and municipal bodies, and disclosing related data in the mining industry.

The OGP membership requires compliance with obligations of transparency, to empower citizens, combat corruption, and use new technologies to strengthen governance. UCA, through its Civil Society Initiative, has been part of the OGP process from the first steps of its implementation in Kyrgyzstan. UCA has provided support to develop the OGP portal and information materials, and has organised training sessions on OGP and open data.

Development Dialogue Addresses Health Emergency Preparedness in Kyrgyzstan

The Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) of UCA’s Graduate School of Development, based in Bishkek, and the United Nations in Kyrgyzstan co-organised a development dialogue on April 9th. Over 60 high-level government representatives, parliamentarians, development partners, researchers, technical experts on health, and civil society representatives came together to share insights on strengthening health emergency preparedness and readiness to advance health security in Kyrgyzstan. The Dialogue highlighted the critical importance of flexible preparedness planning, strengthening engagement partners, information sharing, strengthening of intersectoral collaboration at the national level, and the critical role that governments and line ministries play to detect, assess, and report public health events. Read more in English or Russian.
UCA Launches New Project on Migration Governance

Led by Dr. Asel Murzakulova (centre), Senior Research Fellow at MSRI, the meeting was attended by representatives from the OSCE Academy, “Polis-Asia” Analytical Centre, the University of Birmingham, and UCA.

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute and IPPA hosted the first working meeting with partners of a new project, focusing on migration governance, agricultural and rural change in ‘home’ communities in Europe, Asia and Africa.

The project proposes an integrated approach to migration governance to address the two-way relationship between labour mobility and changes in agriculture and the rural sector.

UCA and other project partners will conduct a comparative analysis of Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, China, Thailand, Nepal, Ethiopia, and Morocco to analyse the economic, institutional, cultural and agro-ecological factors which shape these relationships. It will also identify the range of governance interventions which can harness migration to stimulate sustainable and gender equitable growth in agriculture and reduce the distress associated with migration.

It is supported by the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020.

UCA Conducts Training to Enhance Research Capacity in Naryn and Khorog

UCA’s IPPA Research Fellows, Marzhan Aikimabaeva, Kanat Tilekeyev, and Bakytbek Tokubek uulu conducted trainings as part of the Mountain Universities Partnership programme in April. Aikimabaeva conducted a five-day training for Khorog State University (KSU) and Naryn State University (NSU) masters students on quantitative methods, including topics on statistics, correlation and regression. Tilekeyev and Tokubek uulu delivered two three-day trainings on surveying techniques, covering qualitative research methods, survey design, particularly research sample definition, and survey methodology.
Building Cooperative Education Partnerships in the Region

Relationship building and networking play a significant role in the career development of students. With this aim, UCA's Cooperative Education Programme organised career and networking events at the Naryn and Khorog campuses in April. Over 45 representatives from potential employers in various sectors across Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan visited UCA’s campuses to discuss possible partnerships with UCA, delivered presentations on their companies, met with UCA students, and offered opportunities for them to obtain summer internships at their institutions.


The event helped students understand major trends and demands of the current job market, as well as requirements of employers. The employers praised the level of preparation and leadership of students, the teaching and learning environment of UCA, as well as the qualification of its faculty and staff.

Fostering a Culture of Environment Sustainability in Khorog

The UCA Green Community, a student club at UCA in Khorog, organised and implemented the second part of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) project in Khorog. UCA undergraduate students led a series of activities for 6-8 year old children to learn about environmental issues, and ways to be more environment friendly. This included a puppet show, arts and craft activities, as well as interactive games. The ECD project aims to promote environmental sustainability and teach children about reducing pollution.

Students Collect over 200kg of Trash for Earth Day

UCA's Green Community, Student Association, and Student Life team, as well as students from Khorog State University organised a clean-up campaign in honour of Earth Day, and promote environmental sustainability in Khorog on April 21st. They collected over 200kg of trash along the river banks, local bridges, victory park and sidewalks in Khorog town. Well done to all volunteers.
Music Festival Fundraiser Supports Women in Naryn

Students from UCA and the Naryn community organised a music festival and fundraiser in April that raised over 20,000 Kyrgyz soms to support programmes enabling women to become independent. Over 500 people from the community attended, including Saltanat Esenamanova, Vice Mayor of Naryn. Students from UCA and Naryn performed national dances and songs, and the festival featured games, face painting, as well as a food fair. It was held in April at the Seitaaly Jakypov “Smart” Park in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan.

Festival of Togetherness Promotes Pluralism in Khorog

UCA’s student-led Diversity Club at the Khorog campus organised a “Festival of Togetherness” on April 6th in Khorog with the aim of spreading diversity and pluralism. The event featured table exhibitions of different countries, as well as performances by members of UCA, Khorog, and international communities. The event created a platform for participants to learn about different cultures, and take steps towards becoming global citizens. Badakhshan TV produced a special news report in Tajik highlighting the event: https://youtu.be/hy4K-cl0iqU.

UCA Launches Tree-Planting Initiative in Naryn

UCA in collaboration with the Football Federation and Naryn Youth Association organised tree-planting initiatives at the Naryn campus in April with over 100 volunteers from the Naryn community and UCA. The tree planting was supported by the Football Federation.

As part of this collaboration, UCA will provide access to young football players from the Naryn town to its sport facilities, for training, games, and competitions throughout the summer.

Photo Competition in Naryn

Sophomore students studying Communications and Media at UCA held a Photo Exhibition at the Naryn campus on April 21st. UCA students participated in a 30-day photo challenge as a part of their media class, led by Dr. Evangelia Papoutsaki, Associate Professor of Communications and Media at UCA. They were tasked with taking one picture every day, with a different theme. At the end of the event, students were awarded certificates for originality, composition, and best portfolio photos.
Building Mental Math Capacity in Afghanistan

A training of trainers on mental math methodology was held from April 15-20 in Bishkek for SPCE instructors from Afghanistan (Darvaz and Shugnan). Participants learnt how to organise and conduct Olympiads on mental math, and teaching methodologies for young learners.

It was organised by UCA as part of the “Pathways to Innovation: Strengthening Mathematics, Science, and Economic Policy Capacity in Afghanistan and Central Asia” project. It is funded by Canada’s International Development and Research Center and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada. The project aims at enabling Afghan trainers to deliver mental math training to over 120 prospective math and science teachers; who are currently studying at teacher training colleges in Northern Badakhshan (Afghanistan).

Good to Know

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education conducted an English Club for elementary level learners led by Instructor Qabilshah Ariz in Shughnan, Afghanistan.

From 2014 to April 2018, SPCE has enrolled over 10,000 students in its programmes in Afghanistan, of which 51% were women.

Building Foundations for Entrepreneurship

A training for trainers on entrepreneurship was organised by the School of Professional and Continuing Education in Khorog in March and April for 10 newly hired part-time instructors of SPCE.

Participants learnt how to generate business ideas, set goals and strategies, financial literacy, basics of marketing, and methodologies for teaching adults.

As part of the curriculum, they also visited some enterprises led by women in Khorog. It was organised as part of the Afghanistan Community-Led Economic Stability Project (ACES) project of SPCE in Afghanistan.

SPCE Expands Reach of its International Testing

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) Cambridge Assessment English centre signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on April 5th with the Sapat International Educational Institution’s Cambridge Exam Preparation Centre. Under this agreement, SPCE will deliver tests to Sapat school students as well as professional development to their teachers.

SPCE is an authorised Cambridge Examination Centre for international certifications, acting on behalf of various international organisations. SPCE can register preparation centres and provide full support such as test registration, webinars, and tutorials.

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Household Food Security and Shock Responses in the Southern Kyrgyz Highlands

Christian Kelly Scott, Fulbright Student Researcher at UCA’s MSRI, and PhD candidate at Pennsylvania State University (USA), delivered a public lecture providing a targeted analysis of household food security and the implications of agricultural, economic, and environmental shocks on food security in rural Kyrgyzstan. Drawing from survey data, it was found that while household diets are sufficient in terms of caloric content, they are often nutrient deficient, and not sufficiently diverse. Agricultural, economic, and environmental shocks were found to be consistently significant in their relationship to household food security. Analysis suggests that financially vulnerable, asset-poor, and geographically isolated households display particularly high rates of chronic food insecurity, with potentially dire consequences. The lecture was organised by UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute on April 29th in Bishkek.

SPCE Students Win Big at Mental Math Olympiad

Thirty students from UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education in Dushanbe participated in the “Genius Kid Tajikistan 2019” Republican Mental Math Olympiad. It was organised by the Imperiya Znaniy STEM Education Academy on March 31st in Dushanbe.

Competing against 500 students (5-12 years old) from across Tajikistan, 24 SPCE students won awards, including titles of Absolute Champion, First Place, Second Place and Third Place in various categories. Congratulations!

Public Lectures

Attitude Changing Campaigns in Different Cultural Environments

Dr. Melita H. Sunjic, Executive Manager at the “Transcultural Campaigning” Research and Communication Agency, delivered a public lecture on “Attitude Changing Campaigns in Different Cultural Environments”. It examined how solid preparatory research helps us understand communication and decision-making patterns; how re-enacting these patterns guide the campaigners to the most efficient communication tools; and how appealing to the interests and values of the target audience can help shake up deep rooted beliefs and behaviors, and induce attitude changes in a society. The lecture was organised by UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration on April 29th in Bishkek. Watch a recording of this lecture at: https://youtu.be/6ekWCae0pls.

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Announcements

Call for Applications: Summer School on Learning Landscapes

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute and the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ) are pleased to announce a call for applications for the second Summer School on "Learning Landscapes through Environmental Research and Monitoring". The Summer School seeks to enhance capacity of students and researchers, who study environmental sciences or conduct scientific research. It will offer lectures, practical (laboratory) exercises and field surveys, covering topics such as geomorphology, natural disasters in mountainous regions, geology of Naryn, climate and phenology, and more. The deadline to apply is May 26th. Learn more.

Call for Papers and Sessions: 5th Annual Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference

UCA’ Institute of Public Policy and Administration, the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops, International Security and Development Center, and the World Bank, invite the submission of proposals for sessions and research papers for the 5th Annual 'Life in Kyrgyzstan' Conference, to be held in Bishkek on October 23rd and 24th 2019. The two-day conference will bring together national and international experts from government and the public sector, development agencies, non-governmental organisations, academia and research institutions, and media to exchange knowledge and experiences on recent socio-economic developments in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia and promote evidence-based policy making. The deadline to submit proposals to the conference is June 16th. Learn more.

Publications

University of Central Asia 2018 Annual Report

UCA’s Annual Report for 2018 is available for download on the website. It highlights the University’s significant academic and research achievements during 2018. English, Russian.

Kyrgyzstan and the Belt and Road Initiative

Dr. Roman Mogilevskii

UCA’s Institute of Public Policy and Administration published a working paper, analysing Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) related projects currently implemented in Kyrgyzstan. An assessment of these projects’ impact on GDP, foreign trade, government budget and external debt, and employment in Kyrgyzstan have been highlighted. It also looks into potential BRI projects and their expected influence on the Kyrgyz economy, and provides policy recommendations for stakeholders. Read the report in English or Russian.

Food Security and Nutrition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Possible Solutions

A policy brief on “Food Security and Nutrition in Kyrgyzstan” was developed as an output from a Development Dialogue organised by the United Nations in Kyrgyzstan, and UCA’s IPPA in November 2018. 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. Read the brief in English, Russian or Kyrgyz.