Did You Know?

UCA's Education Improvement Programme (EIP) conducted professional development workshops for 53 English, math and chemistry teachers from EIP partner schools from seven Khatlon districts and three Republican Subordinate Districts of Tajikistan at the International Presidential School in Dushanbe. The 64-hour programme was held from August 17-24, and focused on teaching Competency-Based Education and lesson planning for curriculum development.

The workshop was delivered by EIP representatives, with support from English, chemistry and math teachers from Tajikistan, who previously attended EIP’s professional development programme at UCA’s Naryn campus in July.

“UCA has a very good approach to building the capacity of teachers in a sustainable way. We are very thankful that several of our teachers were engaged in EIP’s professional development programmes conducted in Kyrgyzstan. Now they are becoming teacher educators, and are training other teachers from different areas of Tajikistan,” said Zuvaydullozoda Muhibullo, Director of the International Presidential School in Dushanbe.

The programme is aimed at establishing a sustainable model of ongoing teacher professional development of teachers in Tajikistan. The face-to-face workshop is followed by a school-based component where participants are required to implement newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve students learning outcomes with support and coaching from UCA’s EIP team.

UCA Expands Teacher Training to Government Schools in Tajikistan

The Chancellor of UCA, His Highness the Aga Khan, is the recipient of 93 prestigious national and international awards. These distinguished honours were bestowed on His Highness for his lifelong contributions to health, education, culture, peace and pluralism spanning over 60 years, which has helped improve the quality of life of millions of people.

- 24 Honorary Degrees (24 universities in 10 countries)
- 28 National Awards (21 countries)
- 41 International Institutional Awards (presented in 16 countries)

Photo: In October 2016, His Highness the Aga Khan was presented the Order of Danaker of the Kyrgyz Republic. It is the country’s highest recognition given to a foreign citizen “for contributions to the strengthening of peace, friendship and cooperation between peoples, and for working towards preserving inter-ethnic harmony and the mutual enrichment of national cultures.”
UCA Summer Institute Promotes Pluralism

The University of Central Asia’s (UCA) Student Affairs and Human Resources departments held a Skills for Pluralism Summer Institute at the UCA Khorog campus (Tajikistan) from August 1-9 2019. The institute was aimed at increasing interpersonal, intercultural, and problem-solving skills in order to deepen personal competence and relationships between departments, campuses and communities. It covered three modules including an Introduction to Counselling Skills, Group Processes, and Conflict Analysis and Transformation.

“I have been surprised and fascinated to see the significant difference it makes to use the listening techniques we learned…and was amazed at how much deeper and more effective conversations become,” said 2019 Summer Institute student.

“I am very impressed that UCA is investing in its community’s ability to support and understand mental health. These workshops have a double benefit – they equip us with strategies to interact more effectively and humanely, and they connect us with each other in ways that we would never experience otherwise. I would love to see this institute continue to grow as I think it would contribute to an amazing and pretty unique organisational culture,” added another participant.

The sessions were developed and led by Robin Higgins, UCA’s Counsellor at the Khorog Campus, Samreen Kalani, Naryn Campus Counsellor, Jonathan Morris, a Canadian counselling and group skills instructor at the University of Victoria and Douglas College in Canada, as well as Dr. Randy Janzen, Professor teaching Conflict Analysis and Transformation at Selkirk College in Canada and other parts of the world.

Natural Resource Management Course for Executive Masters Students

UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) delivered a course dedicated to Water Governance, Natural Resource Management and Resilience in the context of the 2030 Sustainability Agenda. Thirteen learners from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participated, who are enrolled in an international ‘Executive Master’s Programme in Development Policies and Practices’ (DPP), run by the Graduate Institute in Geneva with support from the government of Switzerland (SDC).

“The participants were very eager to understand pressing global governance challenges, and highly committed to exploring innovative local solutions,” said Chris Hergarten, MSRI Senior Research Scientist, who co-led the one-week course from July 28 to August 2 with Dr. Nidal Salim from the ‘Global Institute for Water, Environment & Health’ in Geneva. The course was implemented at UCA’s campus in Naryn, organised jointly with the Graduate School of Development (GSD) of UCA and the American University of Central Asia. It featured interactive lectures on resource governance concepts and field work sessions focusing on natural resource management, and exploring innovative pathways towards a more resilient future.

Participants will go on to complete their DPP Executive Masters, which is an international programme designed for professionals who aspire to leadership positions working in the field of development at mid-career to senior career levels.
Building Capacities of Kyrgyz Museums

In Kyrgyzstan there are over 100 museums with great potential, not only for cultural and educational activities, but also for tourism development. However, this potential is poorly used, and effective use of public relations tools can allow museums to successfully attract visitors and financial support for their development. UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) and well-known media experts, Elena Voronina and Almaz Ismanov, organised a one-day training workshop on Public Relations and Communications tools for national museums on August 23 at UCA in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan).

It was held as part of CHHU’s contribution to the sustainable development of museums through capacity building of museum staff. The activity also addressed the existing lack of opportunity for training and need for skills in marketing and PR, that were identified at CHHU’s previous workshop on “How to Tackle Inertia in Museums” in May 2019. Key managers and specialists of national museums participated in the workshop, and learnt how to build and strengthen interaction between the museum and the public, and to effectively promote museum projects through media, including digital and social media.

“Museums not only preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the country, but are also called upon to fulfill an important educational mission. Today, many people actively use social media, which can become a bridge for communication and cooperation. Youth and tourists should especially become friends of the museum, and for this, museums need to be in constant communication with their visitors through new communication channels and technologies,” said Elmira Kochumkulova, head of the UCA’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit.

The training workshop included five thematic sessions, which were adapted to the work of local museums, and focused on existing communication gaps, as well as social media marketing, and the use of multimedia technologies.

Advanced Computer Skills for Teachers

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) offered an International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) training programme, an advanced international computer literacy qualification, for Information Technology teachers from the Sverdovskii District in Bishkek. On August 15 and 30, over 30 teachers completed the programme and were presented with certificates of achievement.

This programme is conducted under the “Demilgeluu Jashtar” project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development. As part of this project, 50 schools were selected for implementing the ICDL programme and 10 additional ICDL test centres will be created throughout Kyrgyzstan. The training programme is implemented with the support of UCA as an official operator of ICDL in Central Asia. Currently, 11 schools from the Naryn region are implementing the programme. Over 4,000 students from these schools have already been trained, and have taken part in Olympiads.

The programme is implemented with the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme for Kyrgyzstan, University of Central Asia, Association of Social Entrepreneurs, International Educational Debate Association of Central Asia, and Accelerate Prosperity.
UCA Students Conduct Photovoice Summer Camp for Khorog Teens

Three UCA undergraduate students, Shahina Aqdodova, Intizor Silmonov and Marat Mirzoev, organised a Khorog Youth Photovoice Summer Camp, aimed at helping youth express their voice through photography. This student-led youth engagement project was offered to eighteen Grade 8 students from remote and disadvantaged schools in Khorog. From August 13-17, they participated in interactive activities led by UCA students that helped young teens develop their photography, communication and leadership skills. Participants worked together in groups to discuss challenges and opportunities that they experience at a personal, street and city level, and learnt how to give these insights a voice through photography. “It was such an amazing camp. We learnt English, photography, and I developed my communication and teamwork skills,” said Tutiyo Mardonova, camp participant.

The Camp concluded with a photovoice art gallery that featured photographs portraying life in Khorog for children, youth and families. The teens practiced speaking to parents, family and UCA faculty about the deeper meaning of their chosen photos. In addition, all parents and family members that attended the exhibition participated in a dialogue with Robin Higgins, UCA Counsellor, about adolescent development and ways to encourage the unique strengths and perceptions of their teenagers.

“The Photovoice Summer Camp was a great opportunity for Khorog youth to be heard, by expressing their everyday challenges through photography. There were many promising talents among the participants, and I hope this camp helped them to take their next steps towards their personal development.” said Marat Mirzoev, one of the Camp’s student organisers.

UCA Student Wins First Place in Regional Language Competition

Nazira Sametayeva is a third-year undergraduate student at UCA, studying Communications and Media at the Naryn campus, and is a graduate of UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education in Tekeli (Kazakhstan). In August, Nazira won first place in a regional “Master of Language” competition and was awarded a monetary prize of 120,000 Kazakh tenge (US$300) for demonstrating excellent English, Russian, and Kazakh language skills. The purpose of the competition was to support young people who speak the three languages perfectly, to increase the prestige of using the languages, and to promote multilingualism. It was organised by the Department of Culture and Language Development of the Almaty region for university and college students.

UCA Faculty Ready for New Academic Year

UCA’s undergraduate School of Arts and Science welcomed eighteen new faculty members to its campuses in Naryn and Khorog. The diverse group of academic professionals represent Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Australia, Iran, United States, Pakistan, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

In August, UCA held its annual faculty onboarding programme, which covered teaching and learning at UCA, settling into campus life, as well as training and team support through building a campus culture. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, Rector of UCA, also introduced faculty to the vision of the Aga Khan Development Network and UCA, which was followed by a tour of Khorog town, including AKDN projects, and the Khorog Botanical Garden.

Onboarding sessions for the new faculty were conducted at the Khorog campus.
On August 31, 306 students celebrated their graduation in Dushanbe; 244 from the School of Professional and Continuing Education courses, and 62 from the Aga Khan Humanities Project courses. These included 60 Government of Tajikistan employees from various Ministries, and 100 from the mass media who successfully completed the 10 month course in English with support provided by the US Embassy in Tajikistan.

Building Gender Responsive Learning Environments in Afghanistan

Seminars on Gender Responsive Learning Environments (GRLE) were organised by UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education at the learning centre in Ishkashim, the Bazigeer High School (a remote school in Ishkashim), as well as in Rushan and the Wakhan Corridor in the Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan. Over 270 people participated, including SPCE learners, high school students, teachers, the school Principal, as well as the Director of the Education Department.

GRLE supports improvement of gender equity and equality in the education environment, and the seminar covered topics on gender related expressions, gender responsive classrooms, schools, language and lesson planning, as well as stereotypes. These seminars are offered as part of the Pathways to Innovation Afghanistan Project, and is funded by the Canada’s International Development Research Centre in partnership with Aga Khan Foundation Canada.
Preparations are well underway for the first Digital Transformation in Central Asia Conference to be held in Kyrgyzstan in October 2019. Organised by the University of Central Asia (UCA), State Committee for Information Technology and Communications (ITC), and the High Technology Park of the Kyrgyz Republic, the event will provide Information Technology (IT) leaders the opportunity to connect with over a hundred Chief Information Officers and IT leaders within Central Asia and abroad, in both the government and private sectors. The DTCA conference is jointly organised with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, which has designated 2019 as the Year of Regional Development and Digitalisation.

The conference will take place from October 4-6 2019, with two days in Bishkek, followed by a visit to the Naryn campus of UCA to participate in a Hackathon led by the High Tech Park to discuss emerging technologies in the education sector. Attendees can expect to gain insight on how organisations in Central Asia can engage with digital technology, and the role of collaboration in delivering productive transformation. It is hoped that this international conference will become an annual event and a focal point in the calendar of senior thinkers and leaders in the growing digital and IT industry.

Dastan Dogoev, Chairman of the State Committee for ITC, met with Shaukat Khan, UCA’s Chief Information Officer and Altynbek Ismailov, Director at the High Technology Park of the Kyrgyz Republic on August 19th, to discuss plans for the inaugural Digital Transformation in Central Asia conference. Dogoev will deliver an opening keynote address on building a digital roadmap for Kyrgyzstan at the conference, followed by twenty international speakers sharing ideas on the evolution of the digital technology sector globally and in Central Asia. In particular, the discussions will explore how emerging economies can harness new technologies in an increasingly competitive global environment. Registration for the conference is currently open, but space is limited (https://dtca.kg).

Several representatives from the Government of Kyrgyzstan also visited UCA’s Naryn campus on August 22nd to familiarise themselves with the campus facilities ahead of the upcoming conference, as well as explore potential collaboration. Discussions covered projects related to the National Special Data Infrastructure, Open Data Portal, digitising museums, specialised trainings, and research.

“I am really impressed and am looking forward to co-host the DTCA conference and partner with UCA in many ways,” said Mr. Dogoev. “I have never seen such an exceptional institution and high-quality standards. I am extremely happy that UCA is in Naryn,” added Mr. Azamat Burzhuev Cholponbekovich, Deputy Director of “Tunduk” system and Advisor to the first Prime Minister on Digitisation, following the campus visit.

Dastan Dogoev (right), Chairman, State Committee for ITC discussing the upcoming DTCA conference with UCA and High Technology Park representatives.
Higher School of Economics Moscow and UCA Finalise Economics Programme

Boris Demeshev and Natalia Rakuta, senior lecturers from the National Research University’s Higher School of Economics (HSE) in Moscow visited the UCA Khorog campus to finalize six courses of UCA’s Economics Programme. The course designing sessions took place from August 28th to 30th.

Courses such as Advanced statistics, Economics II, International Monetary Economics, Intermediate Macroeconomics, and Intermediate Microeconomics were developed in partnership with HSE.

Dr. Diana Pauna emphasized the importance of this collaboration and stated that “HSE is a valuable partner of UCA and we hope to expand the scope in the future to also host post-doctoral researchers from HSE.”

From UCA’s side Dr. Brahim Fezzani, Economics Lead, Dr. Dilyara Nartova, Associate Professor of Mathematics, Dr. Mirzobobo Yormirzoev, Associate Professor of Economics, and Mr. Jakub Polansky, PhD candidate and Senior Teaching Assistant participated in the sessions.

Professional Development for English Teachers in Tekeli

A Professional Development course was organized for English teachers of Tekeli on August 26-28, 2019 to give them an opportunity to fill knowledge gaps and learn about different approaches, activities, and materials for making the teaching process more interesting. Training was provided by Kalamkas Bitayeva, English Language Instructor of UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Tekeli.

Fifteen English teachers from Tekeli schools participated in improving their teaching skills and language competencies. They also had opportunities to relate content to their own teaching situations, and worked in pairs and groups to develop their communication skills. The teachers were enthusiastic about the course, expressed gratitude to SPCE for arranging it, and were hopeful that such programmes would continue in the future.

Teachers actively participating in their professional development.
Teachers Add Astronomy to Their Development

UCA’s Education Improvement Programme (EIP) organized the first phase of a teacher professional development programme (PDP) for ten physics teachers: four from UCA-EIP partner schools, five from Aga Khan Foundation supported schools, and one from the Aga Khan Lyceum in Khorog. The programme was organized in close partnership with NGO “Innovation and Sustainable Technology Fund, Tajikistan” and Association “Under the Common Sky, Poland”.

The aim of the PDP, which is part of the “Under the Tajik Sky” project, is to build capacity of physics teachers in improving the quality of teaching STEM subjects to schoolchildren by using astronomy. At the end of the PDP each school represented by the teacher was provided with a telescope, Stellarium software, laser pointer, sky map and many other teaching and learning resources. In the school-based phase teachers will not only use their knowledge and skills in teaching but also establish astronomy clubs. A follow-up training is planned for April/May 2020.

Additionally, social skills are important part of the curriculum. Students participating in the project are expected to improve cooperation, team work, communication skills, responsibility for common goods (like a telescope), and sharing their knowledge in the voluntary work for the community. For this purpose an astronomy event for local community of each school is planned at the end of the school year in 2020.

Annual Football Tournament Kicks off in Naryn

The football field at UCA’s Naryn Campus was full of excitement as the Eight Annual Football Tournament kicked off on August 26th. The 5-day tournament gathered hundreds of residents and sportsmen to cheer six teams representing city districts including Almabak, Ardager, Borbor, RTS, Tosh-Bulak as well as UCA’s team.

The Borbor team won the Champions Trophy after a final match (5-4) against RTS, who came in second. In a close game for third place, Almabak beat Ardager (4-3). UCA also presented special awards to Eraly uulu Alisher (Almabak) for Best Goalkeeper; Jumaliev Emil (Ardager) for Best Defender; Ryskulbekov Syimyk (RTS) for Best Forward; Jyrgalbekov Syimyk (Borbor) for Best scorer; and Abdyrahmanov Ruslan (Borbor) for Best Player.

Public Lecture: Evolving Technologies and Emerging Issues

UCA held a public lecture delivered by Brian Lesser, Chief Information Officer at Ryerson University in Canada on “Evolving Technologies and Emerging Issues”. Participants from 7 countries across 30 locations joined the lecture remotely on August 1st.

The lecture highlighted some of the promises and challenges facing higher education including ongoing changes in learning and collaborative work environments, the increasing use of artificial intelligence, the disruptive changes required to better secure universities, and the economic opportunities and challenges of digital transformation. This lecture is the first in a series organised by UCA as part of pre-conference events for the "Digital Transformation in Central Asia" conference. Watch the lecture on UCA’s YouTube channel at: https://youtu.be/cWAYyE0IhU.
Announcements

Registration Open for Short-Term Programmes and Courses

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education is pleased to announce student enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year for English, math, computer and accounting courses.

For all questions, please contact UCA’s learning centers in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan or Afghanistan: www.ucentralasia.org/contactus.

Model United Nations at the Khorog Campus

UCA is pleased to announce its second UCA Model United Nations (UCAMUN) conference, to be held from October 21-23 at the Khorog campus. UCAMUN is a three-day conference organised by UCA students for students aged 16 to 28 from across Central Asia, aimed at supporting youth to promote understanding, tolerance and peace, bringing their voice and perspective to the international arena and create a long-term project to unite youth across the globe.

Participants will roleplay as delegates to the UN and simulate UN committees to solve real world issues with the policies and perspectives of their assigned country. This event will provide students with a forum to obtain skills in diplomacy, negotiation, critical thinking, compromise, public speaking, writing and research analysis. The theme of this year’s UCAMUN is “Youth for a Safer World”. For more information, please email info.ucamun@gmail.com, or visit UCAMUN on Facebook or Instagram.

Publications

The University of Central Asia’s Mountain Societies Research Institute published two new policy briefs. They are available for free download from UCA’s website in English and Russian:

- Lessons Learned from Interventions in Areas of Medium and High Intensity Conflicts: A Case Study of Vorukh (Tajikistan) and Ak-Sai (Kyrgyzstan): English, Russian

- Reconsidering the Meaning of Neighbourship: The Transformation of Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Border Areas after 2016: English, Russian

The University of Central Asia’s Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit has published a research paper titled, “The Russians in the Great Game,” by Robert Middleton. It is available for free download from UCA’s website in English: http://bit.ly/CHHU-RP2

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