

# AUCA Magazine



*American University  
of Central Asia*

*November 2010*

Tilek Mamutov '05  
and Aijan Jumukova '07:

## In Love with AUCA



Andrew B. Wachtel:  
Opening New Doors

Elnura Osmonalieva '06:  
Life Through a Camera Lens

Karlygach Nurmanbetova '11:  
Giving Back to the  
Community



*American University of Central Asia*

## The Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC)



The Writing and Academic Resource Center is here to help students and faculty to conceive of writing as a mode of thinking and learning itself: to use writing to engage and explore difficult texts and ideas in the classroom, to use writing to promote classroom discussion, and to use writing to think on the page and try out ideas.

The Center will offer one-on-one tutorials for students in writing, mathematics, and study skills. It is a place to try out ideas and get feedback in a supportive atmosphere.

AUCA offers US accredited degrees through a partnership with Bard College

Visit us on the web or write to us for more information about how you can get involved in this dynamic learning community:

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Life Through  
a Camera Lens

With a new president and an energetic, fresh approach, the Alumni Association renews its mission to empower the AUCA community in Bishkek, in the Kyrgyz Republic, and around the world.

During the next year, the Alumni Association will meet and hear ideas from any alumnus who wishes to share ways the Alumni Association can work better for AUCA Alumni.

We have already had two successful meetings, and plan to have many more. Ideas from your classmates included: smaller, more frequent alumni events,

an alumni advisory council, more access to career services, more consistent communication, and DVDs of initiation.

As a result of alumni comments, on October 15th we invited alumni to meet the architect of the new campus, see his presentation and ask questions about the construction process. This was followed by a Brain Ring competition between classes here at AUCA. Over 20 alumni competed among former classes and current AUCA students, although we were not able to determine which class was the smartest.

AUCA is undergoing major changes, and we want alumni to be involved. We are working on plans for a new campus, we are developing a new Central Asia Institute to bring scholars from across the world to Bishkek, and we are expanding our continuing education and community outreach programs.

These programs and projects will not be possible without alumni support and input. Our students need your guidance and expertise. In Bishkek people lament that their country is not as great as it could be. AUCA students and alumni are the people who are out in the world to lead this transformation. If you want to see the Kyrgyz Republic succeed, come back and help us succeed. You can help move AUCA forward, opening doors in Central Asia and beyond.



*Sven Stafford*  
Director for Special Projects



# AUCA Magazine

American University of Central Asia, formed in 1997, is dedicated to improving the quality of education it offers by adding new curricula, new programs, and new services to equip its graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to this rapidly changing and developing region and the world beyond.

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Tilek Mamutov'05 and Aijan Jumukova'07

# Welcome From the President



Welcome to AUCA, an exceptionally dynamic liberal arts university in the heart of Central Asia's most livable city. With over 1,500 graduates around the world embodying the transformative power of the liberal arts approach to learning, we look confidently to a future of further innovation, collaboration, and outreach.

We are about to release a new set of strategic goals that charts our ambitious course for the next five years. This plan anticipates expansion of our curriculum to encourage all of our students to take an active role in their education from a new freshman seminar program to their original senior thesis research; the creation of a world-class research and teaching Institute for Central Asian Studies that will bolster our reputation as a vital center of scholarship on a region in transition; redoubled efforts to further internationalize our insti-

tution by attracting more highly qualified faculty and students from around the world; and expanded facilities, including a new residence hall and main campus building to improve our attractiveness and increase our capacity to facilitate high quality learning and develop a new generation of leaders and entrepreneurs.

Central Asia has historically served as a vital crossroads for the exchange of technology, ideas and culture along the old Silk Road. Once again the region is rapidly emerging as a crucial link between east and west, north and south, and our website, an important outpost along the new electronic Silk Road, will provide you with a window into one of the most dynamic institutions in Central Asia. As you browse through our site you will not only learn about our demanding programs and student-centered learning approach, you will meet the students and faculty that make this place so special. We hope you will get a sense of the incredible AUCA spirit that pervades the halls and classrooms. It's a unique atmosphere that results when you gather the most driven and imaginative students and faculty from the region in one place and, balanced with a culture of academic honesty and high ethical standards, you give them the freedom to explore new worlds, question assumptions, develop new perspectives, and follow their passions.

If you are not fortunate enough to walk down our halls and see this for yourself, visit our website often to watch us as we continue to grow, spread our wings and soar to new heights of academic innovation.

*Andrew B. Wachtel*  
President



*Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller*

## American Democracy

On September 23, 2010, the U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic, Tatiana C. Gfoeller, gave a public lecture at AUCA on American democracy. Tatiana C. Gfoeller was sworn in as the U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic on August 22, 2008.

A member of the Senior Foreign Service, Ambassador Gfoeller joined the Department of State in 1984. She most recently served as the Consul General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Gfoeller stated, "In a sense I envy you because you have more liberty to decide the future of your nation than we do at the moment. I encourage all of you of voting age to be active and vote at the coming parliament elections." She then continued her lecture, discussing various aspects of democracy from the perspective of American history and, in particular, the role and influence of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

After the lecture there was a lively discussion, in which every student was able to openly express his or her thoughts on the issue, make comments, and ask questions.



*Practitioners of the Iaido art*

## First Iaido Festival in Kyrgyzstan

On September 4, 2010, AUCA students participated in the first Iaido festival in Kyrgyzstan, organized by the Shiseikan Iaido Club. Iaido is a Japanese martial art that teaches smooth, controlled movements of drawing a sword in reaction to a surprise attack. The festival took place in the main hall of the Sport Palace.

"Iaido is the art of instant exposure and use of samurai sword, which differs from other types of martial arts by its grace and religious meditation. In Kyrgyzstan, the art of Iaido has been developing since October 2007," explained Aida Abdykanova, Chair of Anthropology and concurrently one of the organizers of the festival.



*Supporting children from Ghana*



*Dr. Jeffrey Gedmin*

## Unsung Stories from Africa

On September 16, 2010, the Anthropology Department hosted remarkable guests – an international team with an extraordinary mission of exploring Kyrgyzstan’s pastoral life, with a particular focus on camels. “Why camels?” was the question most often asked of the team’s leader, Sebastian Lindstrom, who also happens to be an experienced traveler and film maker, and the founder of Light for Children, an NGO working with HIV-affected children in Ghana.

His answer was revealing, “Camels are the subject of our research for many reasons. First, our foundation ([www.whattooyousolong.org](http://www.whattooyousolong.org)) is focused on unsung issues from all over the world pursuing mainly relief purposes. Camel is a very unique and special animal due to its very nutritious milk and products (cheese, fermented milk), which have a high potential of bringing relief to those who live with AIDS.”

The students of the Anthropology Department had a chance to talk to the explorers, share their ideas and views about issues of preserving nature, taking care of people, and developing new approaches to solve the great challenges of the modern world.

## RFE/RL

On September 6, 2010, AUCA students of the Journalism and Mass Communications Department had the privilege of meeting world-class media professionals Dr. Jeffrey Gedmin, President and CEO of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), and Abbas Djavadi, Associate Director of Broadcasting at RFE/RL. The students had an opportunity to discuss various issues such as moral standards, confidentiality, objectiveness, and independence of information.

After the event, Svetlana Verchenko, a participant in the meeting, expressed, “I believe such meetings and open conversations with professionals are very important. We get a chance to listen to those who successfully implement in real life what we are now learning in theory as students. It is very motivating and encouraging to me, a future journalist and reporter, to talk and listen to such people. I was once again reassured that I made the right decision in choosing my specialization and future career. After talking to them, I believe many stereotypes about journalists, especially in our country, were broken. All of us were able to see an example of professional reporters at work.”

## Using Writing to Learn: On the New Writing and Academic Resource Center



The Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC) comes with the new challenge to AUCA to make writing a more rigorous component of the undergraduate curriculum.

This academic year, 2010/2011 brings many changes to AUCA. As a new University President steps in to lead AUCA forward, and a new partnership with Bard College in New York takes form, so do new courses begin and new General

Education requirements come into effect. This year sees the introduction of First Year Seminar: The Pursuit of Wisdom, a year long liberal arts course in which all first year students read, discuss, evaluate, and begin to define the concepts of wisdom, knowledge and freedom—not only for themselves in relation to each other, but also through such works as Dostoyevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor," Plato's *Republic*, Confucius' *Analects*, and Simone Weil's *Grace and Gravity*. The year also marks

the first year in which *all* graduating seniors will write a senior thesis—a capstone project to their liberal arts education. To support these new endeavors and to help insure the potential success of each student, AUCA is establishing and opening a new Writing and Academic Resource Center this fall.

The Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC) comes with the new challenge to AUCA to make writing a more rigorous component of the undergraduate curriculum. To help meet this goal and to help meet the needs of students as they face the challenges of writing in First Year Seminar, as well as in their disciplines, the Writing and Academic Resource Center will offer one-on-one peer tutoring, group workshops, and a variety of resources and support (both online and off) as students develop their writing and analytical skills across the disciplines. In short, the Center will be a place where students will not only be able to try out their ideas but receive help in organizing them as well.

As the fall semester begins, the Center has been seeking nominations by faculty of potential peer tutors, interviewing tutors, finalizing space arrangements, and developing a series of workshops that will begin in mid-September to train new tutors in peer tutoring pedagogy. These workshops will focus on training tutors to help their peers through the writing process—from understanding



Peg Peoples leading a writing workshop



an assignment, generating ideas and a thesis, to drafting and revising, and finally, to learning how to proofread and edit one's own writing by learning how to identify common grammar and English as a Second Language errors. Regardless of what stage a writer is at, a peer tutor will help the writer move to the next stage in the writing process. Our goal is to have tutors working in the Center by early or mid-November. At that time, the Center will offer not only drop-in hours but appointments scheduled in advance as well.

Center tutors are selected not only on the basis of their writing skills, but also on their ability and desire to help others think through and organize their ideas. These students along with other interested students in the spring will take a semester long course in Tutoring Pedagogy, a course to be offered each spring to ensure AUCA has a strong pool of tutors each year to support the Writing and Academic Resource Center's initiatives. And if anyone has gotten the impression so far that the Center will offer tutoring only for writing, think again. This fall we are also collaborating with the Math Department to identify and train tutors to help their peers as they fulfill the new General Education Math requirements. Along with writing tutors, math tutors will work closely with their peers in one-on-one sessions to develop understanding of concepts, to identify and articulate areas of difficulty, and to help students understand and complete assignments, as well as review for exams. We are drawing on students *across* the disciplines—to assure all AUCA students that if they feel they need to work with someone in their discipline on a specific assignment, there's a tutor who can assist them.

The Writing and Academic Resource Center is not only for students though. If writing is truly to become a rigorous component of the undergraduate curriculum,

the Center needs to be a resource for students *and* faculty. All too often as teachers and students, we conceive writing as what we do *after* we have read this text, *after* we have discussed these ideas, and *after*, we have thought about this topic and organized our ideas about it. But the goals of the Writing and Academic Resource Center are to help not only students, but faculty as well—all of us—to conceive of writing not simply as a product or an outcome of *having* thought, but as a mode of thinking and learning itself: to use writing to engage and explore difficult texts and ideas in the classroom, to use writing to promote classroom discussion, and to use writing to *think* on the page and to try out ideas and thus develop greater fluency, dialogue, and independent thought. In this sense, writing is one of the most democratic learning tools we can use in the liberal arts classroom.

The evidence of recent research suggests that using writing as a mode of learning helps students become more reflective and flexible thinkers, and provides teachers as well with a range of strategies to help students structure and understand their own intellectual development. Writing integrated not only into our syllabi but also into our teaching also asks us as teachers in the liberal arts to re-think what classroom work is for—it asks us to define our goals, make our expectations transparent, and design teaching practices that foster inquiry, dialogue, and reflection. More reflective students, as the logic of education goes, will make more reflective citizens who are more likely and able to participate in and contribute to a larger democracy. To this end, the Center will



Chynara Ryskulova

The goals of the Writing and Academic Resource Center are to help not only students, but faculty as well—all of us—to conceive of writing not simply as a product or an outcome of having thought, but as a mode of thinking and learning itself.

offer resources and workshops for faculty on integrating writing into the classroom, on creating revision friendly assignments, and on sequencing assignments to help build the analytical writing and thinking skills needed in individual disciplines. Already, we are working closely with First Year Seminar faculty to integrate writing into the classroom, as well as beginning to dialogue and offer assistance to faculty planning and teaching the Senior Thesis Seminar. But we don't want to stop here, we invite all faculty to stop by, introduce themselves, and share their needs, concerns, and ideas, and to learn about ways in which writing can be integrated into their teaching.

by Peg Peoples

# Discover Earth Day at AUCA

Earth Day is a worldwide movement for a more liveable world, which has recently gained footing in Kyrgyzstan. This year, a committed group of 4 AUCA teachers, over 20 students, and 3 AUCA Clubs, with marvellous assistance from the AUCA Student Affairs Office and from local environmental NGOs, organised AUCA Earth Day for the second time.

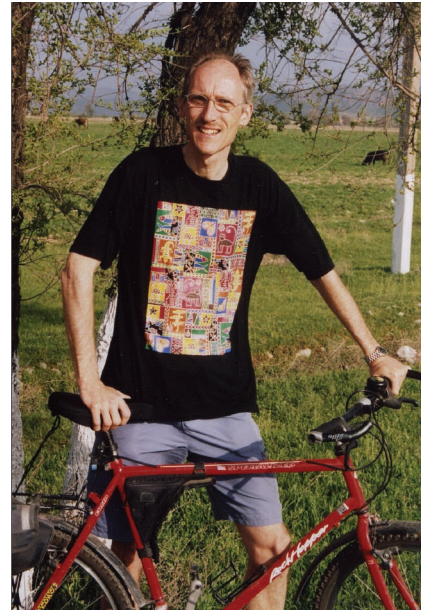
While most activities around the world are centred in the week of 22 April (the original Earth Day, see below), we had our first activity, a successful day of tree planting, on 2 April. A group of 12 enthusiastic students made their way to a medical clinic, opposite the Physical Culture Institute, to clear the garden of stones and plant a hedgerow in close co-operation with the cheerful clinic staff.

Unfortunately, days later we saw very different scenes in the streets of Bishkek, and, understandably, fears and worries about what else might

happen entered our campus too. The Earth Day Working Group considered postponing the event, but decided that sharing our message of co-operation and hope with the AUCA Community would be better. So, with some adjustments, the programme went ahead. Even now, in the beginning of a new academic year, the movement goes on because the nations of the Earth and, indeed, of Central Asia need to unite in order to care for their world and its people.

So what went on at the AUCA campus on Earth Day? The art class had a poster competition for the best expression of the Earth Day spirit. The posters were up in Bravo for most of that week and the three best ones were awarded a prize.

There was a forum with representatives from civil society, who explained why they were working for a better, greener world within their sphere of influence. Ms Indira Zhakypova (NGO Milieukontakt International) shared her passionate story about bringing safety to rural communities in Southern Kyrgyzstan from harmful leftover pesticides, despite the cold indifference of administrators and law enforcement agencies. Mr Kuban Ashyrkulov (International Business Council)



*Martin J. Ossewaarde*

made a plea for more environmental awareness in the business community, which IBC is trying to promote through various initiatives. Finally, Mr Ruslan Isaev highlighted in words and images how Camp Ala Too helps rural communities improve their living conditions and the environment by reducing unnecessary energy spending.

The afternoon programme featured a debate by the Debating Club on the potential of green job creation and the role of government in that, as well as a treat of environmentally friendly snacks made of local ingredients and presented with a minimum of (recyclable) packaging.

We from Earth Day Working Group want to wish you all a fruitful and sustainable year!

*by Martin J. Ossewaarde*



# Home of the Angel of Earth

According to an ancient myth Karakol is the place where the angel of earth lived and, because of its natural beauty, many foreigners and locals spend their summer time there. It is indeed worthy to spend time where the people are really hospitable, educated and tolerant.

The long journey from Bishkek to Karakol has taken us more than three years of study at AUCA. This journey was supported by the anthropology department in July 2010. The purpose of this journey was anthropological field-work, which is a requirement for every student majoring in anthropology. The work is conducted individually under the supervision of department professors. Our group of seven students (Suraya Shams, Aigul Abdurahmanova, Aizhamal Morat, Elona Yubareva, Tynchtyk Bakyt Yyly, Dastan Derbishev and Mohammad Alim), along with our instructor, Togtogulova Mucaram, spent our summer doing field-work in the home of the angel of earth, Karakol.

Our life in Karakol was awesomely diverse, since we were from different backgrounds including Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Afghan. We made a small and very friendly community. We shared an apartment, cooked together, cleaned together, worked in a team, and learned to tolerate each other. House chores were scheduled for everyone, and two people were responsible for cooking and cleaning each day, as well as being busy with their field-work for half a day.

Suraya Shama, a senior in the anthropology department, expressed that her experience in Karakol was really fun and interesting. She continued, "By seeing different people from a diverse region, we learned a lot of information which we did not know before. Also, we got to know each

other better. There was a good environment with different ethnic groups that we did not appreciate during our four years of study together. We experienced different cooking, languages, cultures and traditions from each other, instead of only our research. Finally, we learned how to collect and organize research data. I do not call this field-work 'work', but rather the best time I had at AUCA in my four years."

Nevertheless, field work was the most significant, problematic and complicated challenge for us. Since the interview schedule was arranged by our professor from 9:00-5:00, every student was alone and busy with his or her field-work throughout the day. Being alone in an unfamiliar region for a foreigner was hard. We were in different places such as mosques, universities, and bazaars. Having interviews with different people like professors, Imams, and shopkeepers was interesting. After suffering the whole day with these people we had to reflect on our field-work and write a reflective journal. Every evening after dinner we had a one-hour meeting with our instructor. Every student had to talk about his or her challenges, progress, and problems faced during daily interviews. Additionally we had individual meetings with our instructor about our research. The mistakes corrected by our instructor during evening meetings helped every student to improve his or her field-work significantly. The progress and problems with our research and methods were revealed. Our instructor always guided us and challenged us to come back the next day with even more material.

We experienced in the field more than we expected. In the field, every student had his or her own topic. Aigul and Suraya's

topic was "Bride Kidnapping in Karakol", Ilona's topic was "Language attitudes in Karakol: barriers, stereotypes and linguistic racism", Alim's topic was "Impact of Gift Exchange on relationships and social-political life in Kyrgyz People", Aizhamal's topic was "Investigating Everyday Islam in Karakol", Dastan's topic was "Presentation of Kyrgyz Culture to Foreign Tourists" and finally, Tynchtyk's topic was "Impact of External Migration in Social life of Kyrgyz People".

"In Karakol I had a great experience. I got a chance to visit different and interesting places; I collected information about the activities of tourist firms and local people, about the presentation of Kyrgyz culture to foreign tourist," emphasized Dastan, one of the participants, about his experience in Karakol.

For me personally, this summer's experience has shown me another life. It has taught me how to struggle with cultural differences, misunderstanding, language barriers, and actually being part of a team. From this field-work I learned how to cook, how to conduct an interview, how to find a suitable site, and developed my Russian as well.

I think having such an experience helped us to see the real world of anthropology. In field-work students are faced with reality and must differentiate between past and modern forms of culture. I would like to thank the American University of Central Asia for providing us with an opportunity to see society through the lens of anthropology and thank the anthropology department for giving its students the opportunity to get experience in anthropological research.

*by Mohammad Alim*

# The Heart of Naryn



*Kyrgyzstan is a country that is rich with heroes, hospitable citizens, indescribable and bewitching nature, folklore, and centuries-old traditions.*

Kyrgyz people have opened up thousands of high, mountainous valleys in the Tian-Shan, where they have dwelled, perfected a difficult system of life skills, created a culture, and spiritualized a large space.

Fascination, impregnability, virginity and mysteriousness – words that come to my mind whenever I think about Kyrgyz nature. Majestic, unusual, admirable and divine - that is how I would describe Kyrgyz culture. The idea of exploring my native land was born in my heart long before I was given an offer to participate in an anthropological project that focuses on maintaining the rich diversity of world biology and culture. I dreamed about traveling around my



aim of exploring and discovering a new Kyrgyzstan for myself. The project that I was involved in during summer holidays gave me a chance to expend my anthropological knowledge, learn cultural aspects of Kyrgyz people's lives, and research the nature of Naryn.

While most of us prefer to do nothing except relax during summer vacation, I decided to combine rest with work. At the beginning of

July, I received an offer from Cholpon Turdalieva, associate professor in the Anthropology Department of AUCA, to participate in an anthropological project supported by the Christensen Fund. The mission of the project was to explore the biological and cultural diversity of Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, and based on observations, with the help of fellow students, create short movies in order to educate others about what we learned. So far our team has created several movies such as "The role of sheep breeding in lives of Kyrgyz people", "Altyn Koldor", "Ak-Muz", "Beenin Sutu", "Naryn City" and "Kiyiz". The movies are reflections of what we observed on our trips. They are closely connected with Naryn people's lifestyles, environmental issues of Naryn, and cultural aspects of the Kyrgyz Republic. The other aim of the project was to join young, ambitious, talented, and enthusiastic students from numerous universities in the country together. The project assisted me in broadening my horizons concerning the biological and cultural background of Naryn.

Besides students from American University of Central Asia, there were participants from universities such as Manas, Naryn State, and Kyrgyz-Slavonic. I was impressed by the students' deep academic knowledge



*Enjoying the open air, while performing traditional tasks*



*A welcoming host receiving his guests*

and extraordinary way of thinking. For instance, when a working day was finished and we had free time, we would have absorbing discussions concerning many aspects of life. As result of such gatherings, we had sharp debates, strong arguments, and fiery disagreements. We would end up sitting against each other with red faces, shaking hands, and puzzled facial expressions. Most important, we ended up gaining a lot of valuable information and knowledge from each other during discussions. As it is said, the truth lies in a dispute. So, improvised discussions helped us develop our critical thinking, reasoning, and analytical skills for finding a good answer to a good question. The project provid-

ed a chance for students from different institutions of higher education to sharpen their social skills.

Naryn impresses with its hospitable, open, and friendly people. Wherever we traveled, local people treated us like we were their closest relatives. I still remember the women who shared candies with us and wished us all the happiness in the world. It seemed like that optimistic attitude toward hardships, poverty and unemployment was one of the key secrets of local people's kindness. They never give up; instead, they live in harmony with themselves as well as with the amazing Naryn environment.

Kyrgyzstan is a country that is rich with heroes, hos-

pitable citizens, indescribable and bewitching nature, folklore, and centuries-old traditions. This country is also a great place for studying biocultural diversity and cultural heritage since it has a rich history, outstanding, talented people, and wonderful, untouched nature. I am glad to have had the experience of exploring Naryn, getting acquainted with its people, and learning more about Kyrgyzstan. I suggest that everyone travels to Naryn some day in order to discover Kyrgyzstan in your hearts.

*by Medina Kuldaeva*



# Andrew B. Wachtel: Opening New Doors

**Andrew, you have already been acquainted with the Soviet Union. When did you first find out about Kyrgyzstan, or Central Asia?**

When I was in the Soviet Union in the 1980s I was very much interested in Central Asia, because it was even more exotic and interesting than other countries, and it was quite difficult to get here because I was American. I was in Uzbekistan in 1987, and that was the only chance to come to Central Asia during the Soviet times. I was working as a simultaneous translator with a photographer; we were doing a book, making pictures and writing journalistic texts. We visited Tashkent and Samarkand.

**And Kyrgyzstan came later?**

Actually, four or five years ago, while going to Tajikistan, I took the opportunity and went to Kazakhstan. In most respects, Soviet culture was pretty similar. I don't find Bishkek very different from Soviet times, in terms of peoples' attitudes towards things they say to you, what expectations they have, or how you should respond. It is all pretty familiar. There is nothing very surprising or exceptional. The city itself is very nice by comparison to most post-Soviet cities. It is not as rundown as many others. It is not "rundown" at

all, actually! People seem to have a reasonable life, which is nice, even if chaos happens from time to time.

**I found online that you were applying to another university at the same time as AUCA.**

I was dean of the graduate school at Northwestern University for six years ultimately. And after I was on that job for four years I knew it was time to go and try to see something else. There are two positions that run a whole university: provost, for academic affairs, and president. It is hard to say which position is more interesting. And Claremont Graduate University is a big research university in the U.S.

**So there were different positions proposed for Claremont and AUCA.**

I think a vice president or provost has the more interesting job, because you deal with the day-to-day affairs of the university, and there is a lot going on. And a president of a U.S. University is mostly involved in external affairs, like fundraising and other things like that. In a smaller place like here, the president is involved in more interesting things and can change things for the better. So I decided it would be worth it to make a better world here, than be a

president of some small college in the U.S. Generally I am known as a person who comes in and makes things different in ways that, usually, other people haven't proposed.

**Won't you regret stepping away from teaching and research? Administrative work is something else...**

I was able to do as much research and study when I was a dean as I did when I was a full-time faculty member. Research really takes time in American universities and you have to teach a lot. I don't think administration is nearly as hard as teaching. Because in teaching you have to be inspired every day, you are in front of students, and you have to be ready and you have to be prepared. If you are in administration you can always say I don't know what to do about this and it can wait till tomorrow; you have assistants, somebody can always do something for you. Administrators have to make final decisions, while academics have open doors and they can choose the way to go...

**Are you planning to do some academic work? Write a book for example.**

Yes, I will be able to write a book about Central Asia and one way to shape reform. I wrote a history of the Balkans that was published a few years ago. So I am thinking about making an illustrated history of Central Asia focusing on culture and society, which would be short and sweet. Maybe 200 pages of facts and 150 pages of illustrations. I know that no one has ever done this kind of history, and it would be fun.

**Will you work on translations?**

I'm going to a conference on Russian poetry of the 70s and 80s that will take place next week. I'm finishing translations of one poet of that period, and it will probably be published. I just get up in the morning and write something. Early morning is good for writing.

**You said at the first meeting with faculty that you will study Kyrgyz...**

I'm going to a Kyrgyz class twice a week. So when I learn it, we'll see what I can do with it. I think it's important to know the language of the country where you're living.

**What are the first steps you will undertake in AUCA?**

I think first I'm figuring out the things I don't have to do, because the hardest part is making sure you have enough time to do the big things. It is easy for me to get involved in one more little thing that I can solve. But if I do then I'm not going to have time to think about what the big set of issues is and how to deal with them. What I need to figure out is how to build a new campus, how we will advertise the university effectively, how we will get more students from a wider variety of places, how we will make a more interesting and better student body, and how we will find more money.

**Do you set any delays for the campus construction?**

The idea is that we can start building in March, and then the question becomes is it possible to build a campus in 18 months, so we can be ready by September 2012 to move? The answer is maybe, but also maybe not till January 2013. Certainly, I think

by the second semester of the 2012-13 academic year we should have moved.

**What should we advertise about AUCA? The April events in Kyrgyzstan this year do not help...**

We need to do an ad campaign. Part of it doesn't depend on us because of the whole issue of what Kyrgyzstan is like. If the country is total anarchy and chaos and people are shooting each other on the streets, you can advertise whatever you want, and you are not going to get anybody to come. But, we'll proceed under the assumption that there will be no anarchy and chaos and no people shooting each other on the streets. And we will design some kind of advertising campaign. There has been a long-term goal of diversifying the student body here, which has been quite successful. That's the joy that students still come from areas outside of Bishkek. But we need another couple hundred of students from other places, and ideally we need another couple hundred students who can pay the fee. Those kinds of students exist, but to convince them to come here is something we haven't done yet. What will we advertise? First of all we need to have a better idea of our final product. There are huge competitive advantages to experience another kind of education than you get as the standard in the states or even private universities of this region. So we need to take advantage of that, we need to explain that you get what you pay for, and that what you get is a better, more flexible, more creative education than in A or B, with more opportunities to do interesting things. That is why I have spent a lot of time thinking about how to sell the



university in a relatively convincing way and to whom. For me, it is not enough that AUCA is a better University than KNU or others... or the best in Central Asia, even. I think we should be able to find a particular strength in some field of research for example and try to become the best in the world in that field. There are a couple of ideas I have. Central Asian studies – I don't think it will be that attractive to students from this particular region, but for students from the States and Europe - yes. If you want to have short-term study abroad program, then this is why they would come to study. Why would they come here to study American or European studies? Central Asian studies can be the research side of the university. Because this is something we are now missing to a great extent. Research study makes the university better, more interesting for faculty and more important for the state. Research doesn't necessarily impede the educational process.

**And you certainly have a strategic vision of the education AUCA should provide.**

The kind of education we provide here is based on a more flexible type of curriculum. We do that in the U.S. with an idea that it will create more creative types of students. If you go to Moscow State University or Kyrgyz State University you will be very well prepared, and you will know a huge amount of stuff in the one area that you study, but outside of that you may or may not know anything. And they don't care about the level of flexibility or creativity you have. Most people who graduate with an economics degree from Moscow State University are

competent economists. As long as things don't change too much, they can solve problems of economics. That is not the kind of student we are trying to produce. We are trying to produce someone who understands the ways the economic system fits with other systems in the world and not just in solving certain types of problems - how does my bank calculate my interest rate five years forward from tomorrow's sums. The question is who would you rather

educational skills to do that." That is what we are selling.

**What about fundraising for the University?**

Raising money is about two different things. Finding people who have money, getting some access to them, and then selling them something. You tell them that they have an opportunity to be a part of this incredibly interesting experiment to do things in a very different way and to produce a very different kind



*Jamby Jusubaliev interviewing the President*

be? A person sitting in a little cubicle figuring out what the interest rate will be, or do you want to be doing creative and interesting work? Your choice. We want the kind of people who say "I want to be prepared for different kinds of things. I don't want to solve standard problems that someone is giving to me. I want to be the kind of person who sets the problems, and I want to be a person who is in charge of motivating other people to solve problems. And not because my "brother-in-law is Nazarbaev's friend". But because I have the skills to do that, because I was given the communication, thinking and

of person who will change his world. And if that is exciting for you, then it would be great if you help us. To some extent I think that the stories you tell to the potential students and the story you tell to potential donors aren't different. It's pretty much the same. It's just that students will benefit from what you give them in a different way than donors will. Sometimes the strategic position towards your education is the key.

**What do you see as a big challenge in the beginning?**

The biggest problem is to get the faculty and the students all simultaneously



*Andrew Wachtel recognizing students for outstanding achievements*

aware of what we are trying to accomplish here. That's the challenge. Because most faculty members (here and everywhere else) would probably prefer to do their own research projects, teach their classes in the way that is easiest for them and never think about the overall goals and mission of the education in this university. And most students would like to get their degree with the minimum amount of work. Our job is to push both students and faculty out of their comfort zone in order to create a generation of leaders who can use their talents to do what this region

and the world need done.

**Andrew, it seems you are very cool as a boss, what about hierarchy?**

All organizations are hierarchical and a university is even more hierarchical. There is a little bit more official authority here than in the U.S. but that's I think mostly on the surface. In the U.S. I think people pretend not to differ with authority, but I don't think they differ with authority any less. To some extent it depends on how you carry yourself. You have to have everybody feel we are [in this] together, and

we are trying to make this a better place. The only way to do that is to go out and be with people, play soccer with them or get yourself involved with freshmen during the orientation week. You have to be able to say what you think. But ultimately, there is still a hierarchy, because the final decision is always mine in the end. But I would rather make people feel relatively more comfortable than relatively less comfortable. And sometimes they should forget that there is a hierarchy. I'm trying to meet people with whom I can have normal conversations. As a president of

the university it is difficult to have normal relations with people, because of hierarchy, and you never know what people think. So it is easier to play soccer as we did a few days ago. Because after some time, they forget that I'm a president and they will kick me in the shins when they have to.

**I presume they will let you score more goals...**

That's the problem. That's not so pleasant actually. I think Nikolay Grigorievich will not let me score more goals. He is too competitive to let that happen. There is always this question if I could hurt someone doing something they don't like, and they don't respond, because they feel they have to accept it. You will never find an answer to this question. But outside the university you can. And it will take some time.

**So it's not easy to be a president?!**

I'd like to get a better feeling about what our students want in the broader sense from this world. What do they want from life in general and how can the university work in a way to help them achieve this? The hard part of being the president of a university is to have normal contact with various people, because nobody behaves themselves in a room like when you are not in the room. The goal is always to be like you are in a Mark Twain novel when you can go out and nobody knows who you are in reality. Then you can watch interactions as an unnoticed observer. Ideally that would be possible. One fun thing about the Kyrgyz classes I take is that students first recognize that we are in one group, but since we are all asking and answering

questions, they soon forget that the president is in the room. So I get to watch students' every day behavior. When you come into a place where people have been working with each other for a long time, you are upsetting their chemistry of work by definition. And you want to make things better and you prefer not to make things worse.

**Let's tackle a delicate issue. How do you envisage introducing more teaching in Russian?**

I think we should take this question from the other side. The belief is that it is easier for some faculty to teach in Russian and they would rather do this. It is easier for some students to learn in Russian and they would rather do that. That's seen as a problem. They are trying to get away with something, instead of doing something difficult, and the answer is we should not let them do that. And I agree that in general you should not let people take the easiest road, if there is a harder road that they need to take. But I also think we should figure out what students need. Let's look at our students. 90% of them come from a Russian speaking background. And a big percentage will end up working in Russian speaking careers. I know that even if you are from an English-speaking background and you go to an American university, you spend 4 years learning how to write in English. I know that students coming here from Russian backgrounds can't properly write in Russian. In so far as we make them write exclusively in English, we are taking away their possibility to achieve a high level of fluency in Russian. To me, given that the majority will have to work in Russian, it is a big

mistake. So the question is are they trying to get away with something by not doing things in English or could we make a better student by making him/her more bilingual; to me the answer is yes. You could say that their English is much weaker than Russian and we have to set a limit for the courses they could take in Russian, and I could live with that. There are certain subjects that absolutely should not be taught in Russian, and I could live with that too. But to have this blanket feeling that no course should be taught in Russian, because this is something bad for the university and because there are 10% of the students who don't know any Russian, I don't find that a convincing argument.

**Would you teach yourself in Russian?**

If I teach course of Russian literature, I will teach it in Russian. To give the text of «Великий инквизитор» in English is stupid. While, for example, Plato in English is fine. I think there has to be a minimum number of courses for students from Russian speaking backgrounds because they need it. I don't know how to achieve that. We need to discuss first what our students need. And then we can come up with a plan. I can think of a variety of ways we can solve this. You have to use your brain. This is one of the issues which we have to think about. We will solve this problem.

**Thank you, Andrew, for your time. We are all looking forward to continuing to build AUCA – in all senses – with you, and good luck in your hard presidential mission and learning Kyrgyz!**

By Jamby Djusubalieva

Natalia Slastnikova:

# The Way to Success

You may ask: what is the best word that describes this woman? The answer: development. She has her own formula for success, which, as time shows, has turned out to be very effective.

"If you want to be successful, be proactive, creative and well prepared", Natalia Slastnikova explained.

Natalia has two technical degrees, significant administrative and teaching experience, and is currently the executive director of Leadership Development. She came to AUCA 12 years ago, joining the teaching staff, as well as contributing her administrative capabilities. A teacher by vocation, she delivers learner-focused instruction in leadership, teambuilding, communication, organizational behavior, career planning and development. She has more than 25-year experience in education.

At AUCA she has served on the President's team by coordinating and performing a wide variety of administrative and support activities. Since 2002 her leadership has been utilized in development and resulted in the creation of the alumni association, annual fund, and parent fund. Finally, the advisory board for business administration program was created with the help of her well-established relations in the business community.

Four years ago Natalia was assigned to develop two new projects: the career center and the continuing education center. These are now well known in the AUCA community, Bishkek and beyond.

"AUCA was a small entity; there were so many things to do. I just caught an opportunity. My philosophy is very simple: by developing others we develop ourselves", Slastnikova said.

Excellent execution of such projects has left a positive impression on the students, potential employers, and many businesses. In less than four years the continuing education center has now served more than 6000 non-traditional students, and its portfolio includes more than 50 leading Kyrgyz and international companies.

The courses and trainings developed by Natalia, such as effective presentation and public speaking, management skills, leadership in organization, and career planning are aimed at



*Natalia Slastnikova*

personal enrichment and professional development.

She has been engaged in the development of multiple career center projects in Kyrgyzstan. More than 20 Career Centers have been developed in higher education institutions. She is the author of three manuals for students and career centers that are published with USAID support.

She is always active in the community and volunteers her time advising the local AIESEC team, conducting trainings on leadership for high school students in the region and career trainings for students in other institutions.

Her formula for success accompanies Natalia everywhere she goes: "If something is undeveloped, you always have a chance to develop it."

*by Alexandra Revina*

Karlygach Nurmanbetova'11:

## Giving Back to the Community

Listening to a success story is always interesting and exciting. Taking this into consideration, we would like to introduce to you Karlygach Nurmanbetova. She is a senior of International and Comparative Politics (ICP). Karlygach has chosen ICP, because it is her main interest, and also because it is a field that can help her to make a difference in the world. Currently she works as a FLEX alumni coordinator for American Councils for International Education and is an activist for the Unity Fund at AUCA.

"I believe that brilliant and active young people are the ones who can change things for the better. They are the true treasure of our nation," reassures Karlygach. Participation in the FLEX program played a crucial role in Karlygach's decision of where and what to study. After arriving back home from the U.S. most of the FLEX alumni have a sharp sense of responsibility for making a contribution to the development of their country. Her job was to lead alumni to implement any of their great ideas, and arrange different kinds of projects and events. It was important for her to be able to inspire alumni to action, and also to help them understand the fact that the program does not end when they arrive. In fact, it only marks the beginning, and it is all in their hands to get the best out of their alumni experience.

This young lady of many interests is also actively involved in charity at the Unity Fund. The Unity Fund was initially created to help the victims of the tragic events in Osh. This marked the moment when the youth of Kyrgyzstan rose to contribute to their society, and there were many



*Karlygach helping at the Children Cancer Center*

other active volunteers who helped and joined the Fund. The Unity Fund would not be able to operate without the great support of the initiators and volunteers. Two AUCA students were pioneers in this: Nadezhda Pak and Jennie Jie. Nadezhda Pak, a FLEX 2010 alumna, became very active immediately after her arrival from the U.S. Jenny Jie, originally from China, has always been willing to help Kyrgyzstan in any possible way. In

the very beginning the students were implementing only certain, basic activities. Later, it became a fund. The name UNITY symbolizes the unification of different people regardless of their nationality. Thereafter, many other small range projects were implemented. But everything was done with the support of the volunteers, many of them AUCA students.

The academic year has just started, but Karlygach and other



*AUCA Unity Fund team*

activists have already implemented many activities (i.e. visiting the Psycho-Neurological orphanage in Belovodsk, the child cancer center; bringing children from Osh to the Flamingo Park; purchasing medicines for the south). The Unity Fund members were active during the whole summer, and the momentum helped them to continue through the beginning of the academic year. The very first activities were gathering humanitarian aid for Osh and Jalalabad, which was the most important issue. Many children from Osh arrived in Bishkek for rehabilitation, and during this period the activists were fortunate enough to take about 100 children to the Ala-Too cinema and to the Flamingo park.

Karlygach is the type of person who believes that everyone can do their bit to change the world. How did this philanthropy and incredible desire to help people come to a charm-

ing young lady? Answering this question, our guest said that her job brought her to feel this way. Before she was just an ordinary student, concerned with completing her homework, doing her own business, and nothing more. But after her year serving as alumni coordinator, Karlygach has realized that everybody is responsible for those who are in need, especially children. And it is not right to be indifferent and to stay aside, acting as if nothing bad is really happening. She was nurtured by this sense throughout the whole year, and is willing to carry it in her heart in the future as well.

Besides university and philanthropy, Karlygach has plenty of other engagements. She enjoys writing poems and stories; loves cooking, which helps her relax and gives freedom to her imagination. The thing she enjoys the most is visiting her parents. "My parents are the most precious

thing I have, and my native village – Kochkor, located in Naryn oblast, is the best place on the planet for me," says Karlygach.

"For the small successes I have achieved up to this point I want to thank my parents, who were always there for me, who believed in me and my strength. They are the people who gave me so much, not asking for anything in return, and devoted their entire lives to my brother and me. My friends serve as an example for me and also as a great support. My teachers, professors, and elders have taught me so much, and I am still learning and will keep learning from them," Karlygach concluded.

A bright and talented AUCA student, a responsible citizen of her country, and a person of unbelievably kind heart, Karlygach is an example all AUCA students can aspire to be.

*by Aliona Kim*

Cholponbek Jumashukurov '02:

# Conquering Corporate America



*Our special guest and author of AUCA success story is Cholponbek Jumashukurov. He graduated from AUCA in 2002, majoring in Business Administration, and currently works as an analyst at Farallon Capital, a private investment firm based in San Francisco. He won an FSA FLEX scholarship to study at a high school in the U.S. and afterwards entered AUCA. He received his MBA from Harvard University and has experience working in the investment and banking sector. Prior to Farallon, Cholponbek worked at Deloitte and Touche, McKinsey and Goldman Sachs.*

## What was your experience at AUCA?

AUCA was great for me, I wouldn't exchange it for any other university in the world. I made my closest and best friends there, including Adilet Dadybaev, Taalai Nasirdinov, Kanybek Konokbaev, Azamat Ibraimov, Chyngyz Jamankulov, Bek Chalbaev, Ulan Kojomuratov, and Edil Azhibayev. I met many wonderful and impressive individuals like Almaz Bazarbaev, Asel Kasenova, Aijan Soodaeva, Daniyar Ilybaev, Elnura Osmonalieva, Mirlan Karabukaev, it's impossible to name everyone,

the university was able to gather truly exceptional talent. I hope one day these people will lead Kyrgyzstan.

In terms of education, AUCA gave me a particularly strong knowledge in accounting (Tatiana Filippovna), macroeconomics, (Munara Artykovna), and management and organizational behavior (Kamila Dushebaevna). Later in my career I always felt I had solid foundations in these subjects.

AUCA is obviously a very important part of my background. It is becoming more well-known as more alumni spread around the globe each year. Though the American-style grading system was a big plus, 10 years ago when I studied, it was less known. Therefore, it was important to differentiate myself from fellow students. I was very fortunate. I feel that it played a key role when later applying to these fine institutions.

## What are your thoughts about success? Can you claim you are a successful person?

It is too early to tell whether I am successful or not. In terms of my achievements so far, I think they were due to a combination of a lot of luck and hard work.

In terms of hard work it has been important to set the correct long-term direction and be very focused and disciplined in executing it.

I have also been fortunate in having the right mentors at different stages. It is very important to find and stick with a person, from whom you can continually learn. I also keep a list of lessons I learn,

but I'm not disciplined in actually reading them later.

In general, I am a relaxed person. There should always be a work-life balance. I like to party and probably did actually party too much during my freshman year at AUCA.

**And talking about the years at AUCA – any more fond memories?**

One of my great memories is the Halloween party during my 2nd year, when my friends and I prepared a scary room, which was so popular that it caused a long line. We charged a fee to enter and won the best room award, and were rewarded with a huge cake. We used part of the money to buy a large bottle of Coke for us. Sweet memories: fun, cake and soda!

**To your mind, what else makes AUCA a special place?**

First, what I liked most about AUCA is the lack of corruption and bribes. It is really unique in post-Soviet countries, and AUCA is much different than some other local universities. Secondly, AUCA's scholarship program and admission process provided great opportunities for students from Kyrgyzstan's provinces, who usually come to Bishkek with no special social ties to enter better colleges. I saw many talented students from rural areas be able to study and excel there. Finally, AUCA's care and respect for students makes it a truly special place. I remember how the school's administration did everything to improve students' lives, how it increased computer lab and library hours so students could better prepare for exams, how the university assigned a special budget which the student senate could distribute for various projects.

**You are an alumna now and can look back and make judgments about education and its meaning. How do you see the role of alumni in supporting**

**AUCA?**

It is a gradual process. As AUCA increases its alumni base and the existing base matures, the alumni should be able to provide more serious support for the university. This will work as long as AUCA keeps providing a good student experience and continues investing in keeping alumni connected. The support from alumni should not be limited to participation in fundraising activities, but more importantly giving back through sharing knowledge and experience with current students. I know some examples of my peers who voluntarily taught subjects in AUCA after earning degrees abroad. Over the years my friends and I did a couple of presentations to current students on the management consulting industry, telecom sector, retail banking, professional services abroad and how to apply to top MBA programs abroad.

**We also know that AUCA became the place where you met your wife. Could you kindly elaborate on this?**

I met Saltanat in Bishkek, but not exactly at AUCA. We studied there at different times but obviously still share the same university background. She studied economics, and now is continuing her education here in the U.S. Saltanat has a unique personality, which is tough to find; and I am very fortunate that we are together.

**If you had to live your life over again, what one thing would you change?**

I would not really change anything. There are a couple of mistakes, which I strongly wish I had avoided, but they are in the past.

**Your craziest dream?**

The Kyrgyz Republic proudly entering the list of top 10 countries in the world with the lowest corruption and crime rates; the best education, healthcare, and business opportunities. The fier-

est national debates are on how to allocate country's large reserves and how to more fairly conduct the hugely popular Kyrgyzstan citizenship lottery.

**What do "Harvard boys" do in their free time?**

There are probably many stereotypes about Harvard and its alumni. I enjoy spending time with my family, reading books, watching movies, playing soccer and watching team sports. I like to read as much as possible. As famous investor, Charlie Munger, says, reading is the best way to become wiser. I have a long list of books I want to read.

Again, my work-life balance is important. Success does not equal happiness. As Ingrid said, "Success is getting what you want, and happiness is wanting what you get."

**So, what's next for you? Any ambitious investment plans?**

I like where I am now. Directionally, I would like to continue investing in myself and becoming a better professional. The three best investments in life are your education, your health and your relationships. They all usually pay off well.

**Anyone you would like to thank who has influenced who you are today?**

Yes, professionally I am thankful to several people, including Tatiana Parfenova and Kamilla Sharshekeeva, my favorite AUCA professors; Julia Mikhailova, my manager at McKinsey; Michael Kho, my senior buddy at Goldman; and Bill Duhamel, my previous mentor and the man who introduced me to value investing. I was also heavily influenced by the books, essays, and speeches of Stephen Covey, Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger.

*By Aliona Kim*



Chyngyz Jamankulov '02:

## A New Star in the Banking Sector

AUCA is proud of many of its brilliant graduates from all over the world, and every success story is precious and worthy of attention, because it is our extreme joy to see our students growing and pursuing great careers and achieving new heights. Chyngyz Jamankulov graduated summa cum laude in 2002, and holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in banking and finance. At the moment, Chyngyz is responsible for managing credit risk of retail lending products such as personal loans, credit cards and mortgages in his capacity as Head of PFS Credit at HSBC Bank. He joined the Royal Bank of Scotland (former ABN AMRO Bank) in 2007 in a lateral move to broaden his skills and areas of expertise after spending five years with Deloitte in internal control and audit advisory. Chyngyz recently became a part of HSBC Bank after it acquired the retail banking assets of the Royal Bank of Scotland in Kazakhstan. As any professional in his field, he can be characterized as a serious, purposeful, hard-working person, and at the same time curious and fair.

His AUCA years were a special time for Chyngyz and he keeps fond memories of his friends and studies. He reminisces, "AUCA provided me with a solid academic foundation and a close circle of friends. Its excellent reputation helped me get a job at one of the best employers in the market. Unwavering adherence to its core values and its vibrant and inspiring culture make AUCA a special place. I will always remember an energetic and pleasant atmosphere that was always present in the corridors and cafeterias of the university."

Chyngyz had the privilege of taking classes from many out-



standing professors who shaped his thinking. In particular, he mentioned Tatiana Parfenova, an accounting professor, and Chinarbek Otunchiev, a visiting lecturer on capital markets. He is grateful to his professors for the example they were to him, of loving knowledge and being always willing to learn. Talking about being an AUCA alum now and what it means, he is sure that alumni can promote the AUCA brand through their personal successes, through passing their knowledge and experiences to students as visiting lecturers, or assisting them in job related or other queries. Last but not least, they can directly contribute to AUCA through participating in fundraising campaigns. Chyngyz believes it is vital to stay connected and be thankful in a practical way to the university.

When asked about success and how he would describe it, Chyngyz said that it is imperative to have a clear vision and work hard to make it happen. As

for regrets in his life, he quoted a famous song "Regrets I've had a few, but then again too few to mention..." Another component of this successful entrepreneur is to live with the maxim that each day he should learn something new. This is his biggest motivation. If some free time is there, he is a keen supporter of Arsenal and always enjoys a chance to watch a good football game. He also likes taking long walks and having deep conversations with his wife. Family and friends are important for Chyngyz and he highly values close relationships with them.

Speaking about his plans for future, our hero says: "I plan, in the short run, to continue to work in retail banking in Kazakhstan and, possibly, in other countries. In the long run, I would like to return to Kyrgyzstan and apply my experience in risk management in my home country."

by Aliona Kim

Elnura Osmonalieva'06:

# LIFE THROUGH A CAMERA LENS

*Elnura Osmonalieva is a promising independent filmmaker and producer. She came to AUCA in 1998 after a student exchange year in the USA as a FLEX program participant. Being very interested in camera work, photography and drama, Elnura joined the Journalism department, but later transferred to the International and Comparative Politics department. Today Elnura is back on the filmmaking path. A few months ago she won the International Almaty Film Festival with her film "Shaken Zhuldyzdary". In addition to her new hardware, Elnura was also the winner of the Best Director Award at the Master Class of Ernest Abdyjaparov and was the Main Award Winner at the Second Auteur Film Festival for young filmmakers of Central Asia.*

**Elnura, you have just returned from the film festival in Amsterdam. What was this trip all about?**

The International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) is one of the leading documentary events in the world. It offers an exclusive training program for emerging filmmakers, producers, and film students from home and abroad. Each summer the IDFA Academy organizes summer schools to help filmmakers to strengthen the narrative of their films. I was invited to attend the IDFA summer school to work on the "Pasture in the Skies", a documentary film I am working on this year with Jasper Osmund, a well known editor from Denmark. Thanks to this workshop, I now know much more about structuring a documentary in its script stage and later during the editing.

**I assume you have often heard this question: is it easy to be a young film director?**

Filmmaking never seemed to be, nor did it turn out to be easy. The work of a filmmaker requires a lot of input - intellectual, artistic and physical, and when combined with producing, the workload doubles. You follow your artistic desires and then you find yourself in a situation where you need to prove something to others through your films. Every single person in your audience comes to watch your film with the desire to be satisfied. The challenge comes in brushing away the expectations of others and fol-

lowing your own vision. This includes brushing away the desire and expectation to succeed. Filmmaking also heavily affects my personal life. In Amsterdam I met a number of people who had decided not to have children, so they could focus on filmmaking only. It struck me again, this realization of how much commitment cinematography requires.

It is a lot of fun, nevertheless. Meeting people and working with people who are usually fun, different, not-normal in a good sense. Traveling and having the privilege to create something that everybody has an interest in. "Cinema" and "film" are magic words, and most people want to be a part of it, either through being in a film or by watching it.

I get much support from my husband Tolondu Toichubaev who did a lot to get the post-Soviet Kyrgyz cinema off its dead zone. He co-founded a production company "Oy Art" together with Aktan Abdykalykov, and with great input from Altynai

Koichumanova "Oy Art" was able to produce successful films and push around the idea of independent filmmaking. The result is a new group of filmmakers with prizes from big festivals and people's interest in Kyrgyz cinema.

**So how come you chose this path? Is there anyone or anything that has influenced your decision?**

My mother Nasiba was the main person who gave me my backbone. Most of the things she taught



me in life really helped. My father Madalbek gave me a philosophical attitude to life and my favorite quote from him is “kop bolso olturot”, which means “don’t be afraid, the worst thing enemies can do is kill you”. I was lucky as a FLEX student and had wonderful parents there as well – Veryl and Larry Andersen. My host mom taught me how to be a professional at work and combine career with family. She had hosted twelve students before I arrived despite having two jobs and each of her host students thought she and her husband were these incredible host parents.

As for the filmmaking, it was a decision that did not come overnight or an idea that struck me one day. I have always felt the urge to create and as a child and teenager, I wrote poems while dreaming of writing books. I often imagined having a house somewhere high in the mountains among woods and writing. However, I was also very intrigued by images. My father was an amateur photographer as a student and took photos with black and white film. One of his photos was among my favorites: two smiling boys, his younger brothers, standing, facing the camera holding a large dog by its front legs. The dog looks calm and pretty happy and even its tongue is sticking out merrily. On the tree next to them, a cat is looking at the dog, fully concentrated and ready to react at any moment. I loved to look at this photograph. It gave me a wonderful feeling of childhood, carelessness and it was full of life because of their smiles, the way the camera captured a moment of leisure, and fun witnessed by a cat from a very different angle.

While growing up, I used to watch films to see how they were made by trying to understand how the camera moved and where the cuts were. I also learned that this was best done, especially with music videos, if the sound was turned off.



*"Almaz" is a story of enduring hope*

As a FLEX student I had my host parents' video camera for one year and took class on media communications and loved looking at the world through the camera lens. My tutor told me that I had “a good eye” and a local television station invited me as a camera operator to a number of events. I still dreamed about writing though.

Later, however, when I was confronted with a blank piece of paper to write up an assignment at a journalism class, I felt a great loss and that feeling lingered for a number of years. This desire to write now helps me to write scripts and proposals to get funding for my films.

#### **And when you decided to go “pro”?**

I chose to get serious about making films in 2006, during the time I was graduating from AUCA, because I felt a strong urge to do what I saw director Ernest Abdyjaparov do at the set of the “Pure Coolness”.

Two years later, when I was talking and talking about wanting to make films and reading some literature, I made my first short film. A personal mischief that occurred shortly before the making of this film, and lingered

on for a while after I completed it, really set me strongly in the direction of film making, as it was the only thing that could keep me distracted. Now filmmaking has turned into an obsession I love to have, the profession I cannot do without, and turned out to be the kind of life I have been looking for without even realizing it.

**Eugene Grishkovec said that “Young filmmakers do not shoot real films, but rather dream about money and house in Nice”.**

My energy in filmmaking mainly comes from the desire to bring change to Kyrgyzstan, promote creation of an open society and live in an environment that is not hostile to people who are different, who want a better life or future and who want to formulate their own independent opinions and choices.

#### **Your last movie “Almaz”, what is it actually about?**

“Almaz” is about the strength of hope, and desire to be happy despite the odds. The film is made primarily for the Kyrgyz audience, although everybody told me it was a wrong approach and one should make a film for all of humanity. With this film I

wanted to target the Kyrgyz audience primarily. The reason for this was one of my major frustrations with Kyrgyzstan as many young people, as well as parents, seem to have lost the understanding of how important education is.

For many, poverty and hardships justify a life where education is not a priority, because there is never money for it, or because they see that it is not educated people who succeed, but those who are corrupt. There seems to be no understanding of the long-term value of education both for personal development and satisfaction, as well as professional accomplishment. Therefore I decided to make a film to tell a story that would refute these ideas, senses, and stereotypes.

**How did you find a hero for this movie?**

I met Almaz by coincidence at the Center for Protection of Children (CPC) a couple of months after I started working on this film project. He was really the person I was looking for – bright, positive, sincere and really strong. Almost immediately I knew he could help me let others know that studying was worthwhile and that challenges, even the hardest ones, could be overcome.

I found funding and we started shooting. I must admit that I did not have much sense about how the film would come out, but I really wanted to tell Almaz's story in a way that would not bring pity to him by becoming yet another film on poverty and children, but inspire, cause admiration and recognition.

**Since "Almaz" is about hope and happiness, what does "happiness" mean to you?**

I do not think I know what happiness is for me, as I always seem to be struggling. I often feel happy, and the main source of my happiness is my daughter Churyok. For the time being I am

rushing through life like somebody is after me. There is very little time for contemplation. This makes me miss my teen years as I seemed to be much wiser and less frustrated back then.

**What do you think about the prospects of cinematography in Kyrgyzstan?**

Tough question... If we manage to get ten or twenty people educated in the best film schools in the West then we might have a rather noticeable change. Otherwise, no increase of funding will be able to help Kyrgyz cinematographers make better films. It is not just the issue of money. It is also an issue of understanding the modern world, the modern cinema industry, and film making techniques and approaches. I gave up on my belief in somebody making great films without learning about cinema or about directing, script writing, and editing after the IDFA summer school in Amsterdam. Just a week of talking with people who had the knowledge and experience gave me so much artistic and technical value.

**And what values for your success were laid at AUCA?**

I had great professors who taught me to be creative, persistent and responsible. I learned to formulate my thoughts in writing. AUCA gave me the belief that everything was possible if enough effort was made.

When I visited AUCA for the first time, twelve years ago, I was still a high school student. Back then I thought, looking at AUCA students that they must be some divine creatures because they looked so busy and important with their concentrated faces and backpacks. I just could not believe that just a year later I would be one of them. Therefore, being admitted to AUCA was already achieving a benchmark for me.

**How did you do at AUCA?**

I had a GPA of 3.6 while having one or two part time jobs. Because I needed to work, I never excelled to the extent I wanted to, in any of the courses I took. I was always rushing, stressed or busy. I remember being always late for 8 am classes, because I would stay up till 3 am after work studying. Therefore, I avoided taking a class that started at that time if it was possible. Despite this I was part of Amnesty International Club, KVN and "The Star" for a while. I also participated in three large debating tournaments on behalf of AUCA and came out the winner of the Central Asian Championship, CIS Championship and did well at the International Competition in Glasgow.

With several academic leaves, related to work and travel, I finally graduated in 2006. I still wonder whether I would have been able to gather my strength and finish my studies, if not for my husband who was telling everybody we met that he "was living with an uneducated person". Everybody laughed but I saw his point. So I came back for that last semester, and although I could not complete my senior thesis, which was about the Kyrgyz State Television not fulfilling its obligations, I did enjoy the preparations for the state exam on Kyrgyz history, which I successfully passed.

Unfortunately, I missed the graduation ceremony, because I was away at the filming of "Pure Coolness", where I had a small role. It took ten days of filming, and the director did not let me leave even for one evening. Therefore, I do not have this sense of closure with AUCA. It just feels like I am on a long academic leave again.

**But is it still a special place for you?**

In some ways AUCA was not as exciting as my high school, where the head teacher was gay

and was dating another male teacher, both married; another married female teacher was seeing a student, and the oldest teacher of all was harassing female students on a daily basis. AUCA was “normal” in that sense.

My fondest memory of AUCA is always having people, both professors and students, willing to help. It is the concentration of talented youth, committed and qualified professors, and staff who communicate with respect and desire to make the best of their time at the university.

I loved studying in AUCA also because the students were told to be, and really were, the owners of the place. I think that our student petition in fall 1999 to replace the toilet soap, which had a stinky smell, was really the pinnacle of student activism. It could not get better than that and, of course, the administration told us that we had no shame.

Most of the best things I have in my life come from AUCA – knowledge, skills, contacts, impressions and inspiration.

I think alumni should stay in touch via alumni meetings, come to meetings with students, recruit high school graduates and consult them about the enrollment procedures.

**I believe our readers would love to know what your favorite movie is.**

I have not watched that many films or as many as one would expect a filmmaker to watch. From those, which I have seen, I like Fellini’s “8 ½” and “Empty House” (3 Iron) by Kim Ki-Duk.

**So what's next for you? New movies?**

I have to learn a lot. I still have great doubts about my talent as a film director, but for the time being I would like to keep making films, as I, now, cannot imagine my life and myself without it.



**Any plans of winning Oscar? advice to them?**

Although I understand the importance of it and enjoy festival screenings of my films, I was never really interested in film festival success. I often feel like making a film is very similar to writing poetry, and how could you dream of writing a poem that could win a prestigious award? You either write it or you don’t.

**At AUCA we have a Student Movie Club, where students get together to film movies. Any**

Try getting movies that get into the selection of competition programs of the main international film festivals. Certainly watch the classics and, if interested, watch documentary films – they have the added value of representing true life stories. Please invite me to the screenings – I would love to watch some films with you.

*By Kemel Toktomushev*



# Alina Murzaeva '07: In Perpetual Motion

*Alina Murzaeva is a product of the International and Comparative Politics department class of 2007. She completed her Master of Science degree in International Humanitarian Law from the London School of Economics and in Public International Law from the Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic. Currently, she serves as the Communication Legal Officer at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where she contributes to the promotion and implementation of international humanitarian law in Kyrgyzstan.*

**How come you chose to promote and strengthen humanitarian law and work in the sphere of international relief?**

It has been a long journey. I have tried several different careers, starting from banking and editing a so-called "glamour" magazine. However, I feel in a very comfortable place now. International law is the passion of my life. Actually, public international law was my minor at AUCA, and I should say that I left my heart at the law department. Also, though often criticized, I do believe in the humanitarian values that international law aims to deliver, and this is exactly the reason why I am with the ICRC.

At the same time, it is really a great pleasure to work with students. I often come to the international humanitarian law

classes at AUCA, and to be frank, it was a shot from out of the blue to see how talented our students are. Each of them possesses individuality and a fantastic personality. I am very happy to have an opportunity to continue targeting students by providing support and various opportunities.

**How would you describe yourself in 5 words?**

Hate it or love it, I am still number one. A bit more than five words, but I do not like limits anyway.

**Sounds very ambitious! I ask all my interviewees the following question: what are your key ingredients of success?**

I think there is no single "right" recipe of success that is valid for everyone, since it is a matter of personality. As for me, I am sure that no success can be reached without passion for what you do. Personally, I am crazy about my job, where you clearly see the added value one can deliver. So let us say a little bit of luck multiplied by self-dedication equals success.

**And what principles of success you have got from your alma mater?**

The most important thing AUCA taught me is to think. Our wonderful professors made me broaden the scope of my consciousness and urged me to stay critical, which allowed

me to graduate with honors. In addition to that, I have clearly learned how important it is to be an effective and strong leader, yet stay a team player. These kinds of investments are priceless, and one day they will bring in revenue.

If talking about personal growth, our university provides a strong and firm foundation for future development. For me AUCA is, indeed, a special place, since I have met the people who became my life comrades here. That is the greatest gift the university could have presented me.

Even now I often reminisce about my graduation day. It was a dreary, yet warm feeling. I remember standing in line for my diploma and I was thinking, "This is probably it. Now you will receive this beautiful paper stating that childhood is leaking away. But I damn like that!" I looked at the faces of my classmates and professors, and I realized how dear they are to my heart; I spent four years of life with them, and I confess that it has been a great journey.

**Do you have any regrets?**

No regrets at all. You know Richard Aldington once said, "Live and make mistakes, because this is the life". This is why I just live with mistakes, which I actually love.

**Since you mentioned Richard Aldington, what actually**

**motivates you in your life?**

I am afraid to get bored of life, and that keeps me moving, exploring and discovering. The more you achieve, the higher another goal is being set up for you. Perpetum Mobile is my credo. Otherwise, the danger of being stuck in between would be inevitable.

**Never thought of changing anything in your life?**

I would not change any little thing. I should say that for some unknown reason I was granted, from above, the wonderful life I have. I am a happy person, and I am thankful for that every single minute. But if I would need to change one thing with a magic wand, I would have transmitted Bishkek to Issyk-Kul, since Issyk-Kul is my soul.

**Someone has strongly influenced your life views...**

That is definitely my mom. She is the most amazing person in this world. My modest brain just cannot understand how a person can combine so many huge features in one. My mother is a brilliant businesswoman, but my younger brother and I have always been surrounded by her love and care. At the same time, she is the perfect wife for my daddy, with dinner ready and ideally ironed shirts. Always stylish, she never stops on what she has already achieved, because this woman learns something new every day.

**Is she the only person who has influenced you to be who you are today?**

First of all, I want to thank my dear parents for being my foundation, my support and

my driving force. All I do in this life is dedicated to my mom and dad. Secondly, I want to express my gratitude to friends just for being the way they are. Thank you for being crazy sometimes, just like me. And last, but not least, I would like to say thank you to my professors who contributed to the formation of my personality and to my life in general. The lessons you have



taught me are priceless! Wish you all the best, and thank you very much for everything!

**Besides saving the world, what else you do in your spare time?**

The two most important things in my life, and, I believe, in the life of every person, are friendship and love.

What can I say? I am an unbelievably lucky person. I have the best of best friends ever, who make my life so bright and

beautiful. Friendship by itself is a rare phenomenon, and it is hard to underestimate how fortunate I am to have my real friends around me. Real relatives might grow under different roofs, and this is true for me, because all of the people I call "friends" are my family. Thus, I dedicate most of my free time to my friends and of course to my little sweet doggy Masya. In between, I am trying to continue playing tennis and drawing. Meanwhile, I am madly waiting for the first snows to come, so that the snowboarding season will be opened.

**As a member of the AUCA Alumni Board, how do you see the role of alumni in supporting AUCA?**

To be frank, AUCA alumni are not playing the very role they should be playing in the life of our alma mater. Given the strong moral ties, alums have to be more involved in the activities of the university. Here, I believe, the administration and the Alumni Board have to cooperate closely. Surely, there are many brilliant ideas of how to make the AUCA family a home for everyone.

Alums can provide the bridge between the students and AUCA management, representing the practical example of what an American University student can achieve. I look forward to being engaged in this kind of work. I communicate a lot with alumni of different classes of graduation, and all of them are willing to contribute to the development of our university.

*by Kemel Toktomushev*

# Tilek Mamutov '05 and Aijan Jumukova '07:



# In Love with AUCA

*Tilek Mamutov and Aijan Jumukova are both graduates of AUCA. Tilek graduated in 2005 from Software Engineering, whereas Aijan is an alumna of Business Administration '07. They were married in 2009 and now live in Dublin, Ireland. Tilek is responsible for software engineering and IT project management at Google Inc, while his significant other works as an audit senior at Ernst & Young.*

**Tilek, so how did your story start?**

**Tilek (T):** I do not believe we were formally introduced. She even thought my full first name was Tilekus, because that's how our friend Boka (Bolushbek Abdyjaparov) wrote my nickname in the official AUCA Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team database.

We first talked to each other, when we were both on the AUCA SIFE team early in 2005. But then I got appendicitis, and she would come and visit me, help me walk and get me better. But when we were just SIFE teammates, I had to do crazy stuff to get noticed! I even sang full songs in Punjabi.

**Aijan (A):** I remember once we wanted to organize a movie night in the students' room. We wanted to watch Madagascar 2. So I was inviting everybody to the movie night, but it turned out that Tilek wanted to watch it only with me, and he had to secretly tell people to let us watch the movie alone!

**T:** It's very difficult to

imagine how we would meet each other if not AUCA. She could have hired me as a webmaster though, and for her I would have made the best website ever for free.

**What else do you do to make Aijan the happiest woman on Earth?**

**T:** Well, one thing for sure is that I try to make her laugh all the time. It is difficult always to come up with good new jokes though. So while I keep trying and learning, the process may be a little painful for Aijan. But it's just when she is happy and smiling, I feel like I don't need anything else in my life. Aijan is a very hard-working and stunningly beautiful sweetheart! What I love the most is that with Aijan I can really be myself.

**A:** My first impression of Tilek was that he was smart, funny and friendly. I liked the fact that he had many friends and he cared about his friends a lot. Tilek likes surfing the internet, which is no wonder given his profession, but sometimes Tilek loses track of time, he may even forget to

eat!

**Since you mentioned the work, why did you choose such career paths?**

**A:** Although I specialize in marketing and management, I found it more efficient to build a career from a more specific area like accounting. Having technical knowledge in one area opens doors to many other opportunities in your career. Also number crunching and financial analysis are very interesting and challenging for me.

I have been working at Ernst & Young for 2 years. My job revolves around technical accounting principles and interpersonal client relationships. I have to mention the high quality education I received at AUCA. I have never felt like I lacked some fundamental university knowledge. On the contrary, I often felt that I know more than many of my colleagues at my level.

**T:** As for me, I loved math in school a lot. When I was in 5th grade, for the first time in my life, I saw a personal computer and algorithms you



could write for it. I realized that math is more applicable and productive, and it can really make people happier. This is when I decided that this is something I definitely want to do.

At Google I develop internal web applications, which help analyze and improve search quality. If you don't know what web spam is and don't see it in Google search results – it probably means that our work has some effect. Also, I try hard to have as many Google products as possible better localized for Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz language. Unfortunately, I don't have official time allocation for it, so it is more like my hobby.

**And what foundations for your success were laid here at AUCA?**

**A:** I have only fondest memories of AUCA: brilliant teachers, a warm and friendly atmosphere, amazing student concerts, and kitchenette! Entering AUCA was, undoubtedly, the best decision for my future. I did quite well at AUCA, graduated with GPA of 3.56. But studying at AUCA gave me more than excellent knowledge, it gave me this constant need to improve and challenge myself. For that I am really grateful.

**T:** Same for me, although I did not do exceptionally well in terms of grades. Actually, I had all types of grades including some rare ones like “incomplete”. The explanation for this phenomenon is that I was studying very hard only when the subject seemed to be really useful for me, like software engineering, or interesting like Italian. I definitely made life more difficult in terms of finances for my parents than Aijan though.

I also think a lot of extra-

curricular activities in AUCA made a big difference for my career advancement, including the SIFE team, where I sharpened my leadership and teamwork skills. Actually, even my first job was at AUCA: I was in charge of our website during the summer after my freshman year!

**What do you think makes AUCA a special place?**

**T:** Friends. I made amazing friends at the University, and memories with my best friends and other great AUCA folks are really some of the warmest. The first memory that comes to my mind is how we organized AUCA ski trips with my best friends Boka (Bolushbek Abdyjaparov), Kuka (Kurman Otorbaev), Nurik (Nurlan Kulcharov) and Vova (Vladimir Dolgiy). It was fun to gather very ear-

ly in the morning on Saturday and Sunday, buy some snacks in “Narodnyi” and ski the whole day in our beautiful mountains.

**A:** Besides excellent professors and computer and library facilities, I think AUCA has this friendly, almost family-like, atmosphere that makes students want to stay there and never go home! It is these little things that made AUCA special for me: posters and photos when it was somebody's birthday, ski, Issyk-Kul, mountain trips with other students, cozy student room, room #104, SIFE and endless meetings, and many others.

**T:** Academic freedom, free of corruption, academic honesty, especially on teachers' side, is a great example for Central Asia of how institutions can be of a great



*Aijan and Tilek exploring new worlds*

benefit to society! It is really inspiring to be together with great people and extraordinary students from many different countries, most of whom have scholarships for academic achievements. Great international and local teachers who helped us see where we stand in terms of knowledge and where we should aim. I hope other universities in Central Asia will learn all those things from AUCA.

**Mind sharing with us your key ingredients of success?**

**A:** I cannot point out a specific number of ingredi-

ents of success. However, I know for sure that hard work, self-confidence, and being a kind and approachable person are a good start.

**T:** I wish I knew the ingredients! Some of my recommendations, though, would be:

1) Be very positive! Since all events and things have positive and negative sides, make sure you are aware of negative ones, but concentrate on the positives. This approach should reflect, for example, when applying it to your resume. Remember all the good things you have done and what the most posi-

tive thing about them was. Being negative is definitely not an ingredient for success, in my opinion.

2) Find what you love, what motivates you, what you want to achieve. No need to set exact deadlines, but at least choose a general direction. Actually, none of my career paths were exactly how I planned, but I realized later that it was exactly what I wanted. For me, what I love is programming, and what motivates me is the awareness that I help people by means of technology.

3) Always continue learning, both theory and practice.



*Celebrating a new beginning*

For IT specialists, practice is especially important I think. Also learn things outside your core profession! In my case, knowing at least on a basic level several languages always helped me in my career and personal life. In general, try to always be as curious as a child.

4) Work as hard as you never worked before, when you need it the most. I may have been lazy sometimes or not organized, but when it came to crucial moments like graduation exams or going through the Google job process, I tried harder than ever.

5) And the last, but not least: be nice. Unfortunately, many people forget about this while working hard on climbing the career ladder.

**Sounds very inspiring and optimistic! Let me ask you this question: if you had to live your life over again, what one thing would you change?**

**T and A:** We would try to meet each other earlier.

**A:** You know it feels absolutely awesome to be married! Not only did our marriage make us happier, but also I think it made us better people. Of course, there are small bumps on the road, but we try not to sweat the small stuff and enjoy our lives.

**T:** Marriage is the thing for us, I think. We like to try new things together. Together we quite often run, play tennis, surf and wind surf. During the winter we love to ski. We both had no hesitation and got married relatively early – when we were 24 and 22. We are aware of many difficulties that marriage brings, especially over time. But we are confident that love and huge mutual respect will keep our marriage amazing, until we grow old together, live hap-

pily and die on the same day.

**So what's next for you?**

**T:** My plan is to move Google Headquarters to Issyk-Kul, and I would allow not only dogs in the office, but also sheep. Drinking kumys will be a required part of the interview process. I also dream to create a free electronic education system for everyone in the world. You would be able to choose any courses to study from any type of educational system. Those courses would be provided and recognized by different educational institutions. But speaking seriously, together with Aijan we dream of opening a resort in Issyk-Kul.

**Anyone you would like to thank who has influenced you to be who you are today?**

**T:** Parents, parents, parents. They spent enormous amount of effort to raise me and my brother.

Teachers of course played a big role: my high school math teacher Svetlana Eduardovna Mirau, teachers at AUCA, especially Sergey Nikolaevich Sklyar and Nancy Leland who were very strict, but, apparently, it was very useful for my development. Many other teachers! And the AUCA staff was very helpful! I am sorry I can't list all the names, but please believe me, I remember you and I am very, very grateful! Of course, my friends were always there for me in the most difficult moments, and obviously Aijan.

**A:** Parents, of course, first of all. My sister Nurzat who insisted on choosing AUCA when I graduated from school! The whole business administration department was always supportive.

Also Elmira Tursunbekovna Musuralieva – for her shiny personality and excellent lectures. Mahinur Asanovna Mamatova – I absolutely enjoyed her classes; and Galina Gavrilovna Tremasova – she was the best English language teacher I have ever had.

**T:** Also, a memo to all alumni. The mentorship role from the alumni side is very important. While professors try hard to teach the most important and core subjects, it's difficult for them to be fully updated on recent needs from employers' side. This is one of the fields where alumni can help students to grow. Also, from my experience, I remember that it feels very different to hear about the "real world" and how to become successful from people who went through the same system and almost through the same courses as you do. Financial support of AUCA is obviously important, even small support, I think, is nice in terms of expressing care, which is important not only to university staff, but also to students who are studying at AUCA.

**A:** I also see great opportunities for alumni in supporting AUCA. I think AUCA would appreciate not only financial support for high-achieving students' scholarships, but also non-financial support. I realize that all alumni are busy with their lives and work after graduation, but I think many AUCA alumni would be flattered to participate in career fairs, share their ideas, advise them to visit as guest lecturers, and talk about practical areas or new methods that they apply at work.

*By Kemel Toktomushev*

Nurdin Djumaliev`08 and Temirbek Chodurov`08:

## MORE THAN SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS

*After graduating from AUCA Nurdin Djumaliev`08 and Temirbek Chodurov`08 started their own business, opening DJ Bar "Barcode" in downtown Bishkek. At AUCA Temirbek specialized in Finance and Markets, while his partner and friend Nurdin studied Economics of Finance and Banking Theory.*

**Nurdin and Temirbek, what is your definition of success and has your company achieved it?**

**Temirbek (T):** In our sphere, the definition of success is an efficient, automatic business process, and we are still working on it.

**Nurdin (N):** Dominant market share, satisfied clients and personnel, long-maturing and strongly competing business projects. Partially we are achieving these targets.

**Do you think that entrepreneurialism is something that is in your blood? Or is it something that can be learned?**

**T:** Successful entrepreneurialism should be in the blood, and also in the blood should be the drive to learn more about it.

**N:** I would argue with this point, since I sincerely believe that entrepreneurialism can be learned. Education and training, experience and professional skills development, hope and trust; all these things could sharpen entrepreneurialism in every person.

**What role did AUCA play in your life?**

**T:** Today I realize that the Business Administration courses at AUCA, especially marketing, accounting, financial management and team leadership, strongly affected the development of my skills. Now I deeply analyze every step before making important decision.

**N:** I agree with Temir. AUCA laid strong foundations for my personal development. I got deep knowledge in finance, accounting and entrepreneurship, and I use this knowledge every day.



*Nurdin (left) and Temirbek (middle) at the opening ceremony*

**Do you miss these "good old days in AUCA"?**

**T:** Sometimes, especially "kichinet".

**N:** Yes of course: labs, queues in "kitchinet", social events such as initiation, commencement, and orientation week.

**Arnold Schwarzenegger has once said, "Money doesn't make you happy. I now have \$50 million but I was just as happy when I had \$48 million." What does money mean to you, and what are your goals?**

**T:** For us money is just a tool for reaching our goals. We enjoy doing our business and having fun. The most important thing for us is to reach the set of goals and the process of their realization. There used to be times when we had no money at all,

but it wouldn't stop us from our drive for success.

**N:** I agree with Temirbek, money doesn't make people happy. There are many miserable millionaires, even here in Bishkek. Money is just paper that can be torn, lost, given or lent. The most important thing is to realize the idea – it is an art, which brings great satisfaction in life.

**So I assume DJ Bar "Barcode" is just the beginning. Are you planning any new business projects?**

**T:** Yes, we will soon open canteen "Moscow" located in the highest business center of Kyrgyzstan. It will be a luxurious format, but not expensive.

**N:** I remember when we were starting our first commercial project in Issyk-Kul, I didn't

even realize that this could be a first step towards our significant partnership in the future.

**T:** This was the time when we were getting acquainted with each other in business.

**N:** Now it has been already 3 years, but we are still working together and making plans for the future. We set our sights on developing a huge corporation.

#### **Any challenges and obstacles?**

**T:** The local mentality and way of thinking of many people here. We fight to sustain the quality of our work at the proper level. We believe in the philosophy that today is better than yesterday and tomorrow better than today. We do find it difficult to follow this philosophy, but it is exactly what keeps us moving forward.

#### **Is it all just about business?**

**T:** We play soccer every Wednesday, go skiing during the winter, and spend some time playing poker in our summer cottage.

**N:** I spend weekends with my family and with my daughter. I am also a great fan of football, tennis, skiing, and chilling with friends.

#### **If we could introduce you to anyone who would it be and why?**

**T:** Steven Paul Jobs, co-founder and chief executive officer of Apple. He inspires me to achieve my goals.

**N:** The best football player in the world: Lionel Andrés Messi. He would teach me to play football as a professional.

#### **What is the best advice you have ever been given?**

**N:** Enjoy every second you spend at work, with friends, and family. Time is our best asset.

**T:** For me, what liabilities and assets for a business person really mean.



*Nurdin with his wife*

#### **And what do they really mean?**

**T:** That assets can be liabilities if they don't bring benefits. For example, if you have a car as an asset, it eats some of your budget for gas, service, etc. and doesn't bring that many benefits. It serves only your comfort, luxury and not your significant needs. That is liability: you are spending part of your salary and it doesn't enlarge your wealth. The idea is to make a liability an asset, make all resources work for you, not you for them. This advice was given to me from one of my favorite books "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill.

#### **What pieces of advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?**

**T:** First of all, take a challenge, get acquainted with yourself in business, and then you will see what you are made of. I would say that a person must be inspired strongly by his idea and only then he can make serious steps in building his own business.

#### **Anyone you would like to thank who has influenced you to be who you are today?**

**T:** I want to thank my parents for understanding, patience and all support that they gave me in my endeavors.

**N:** I want to thank my friends. They always support me, and I really value it.

*By Kemel Toktomushev*

Social Research Center (SRC)

"Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage"

The Social Research Center at AUCA has completed research entitled, "Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage". The research was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark through Danish Church Aid in Central Asia.

This study examined the extent of involvement of the Muslim community, registered and unregistered religious Muslim organizations, in social processes in Kyrgyzstan and its readiness for further social integration. The study was founded on the idea that the development of Islam should be oriented away from radical politicization towards social activity and integration. The research also examined the Kyrgyz government policies on religion.

According to the constitution, Kyrgyzstan is a secular and law-governed state. Meanwhile, most of the people in Kyrgyzstan consider themselves Muslims, and every year the influence of Islam on society is growing. Following the disbandment of the Soviet Union, the atheist ideology quickly lost its dominant position, and the ideological vacuum was filled in part by religion. Against a background of growing interest in traditions, language and history, religious revival was viewed as one of the major ways of spiritual and moral social development, and as a quest for goals in life and spirituality. The formation of a national state and dramatic changes related to this process often had a cultural and religious overtone, and promoted the ideologization of relations between



SRC team searching for new discoveries

the state and religious communities. The deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the country, characterized by high levels of poverty and unemployment, rampant corruption, and falling literacy levels, has resulted in a growing distrust of believers in secular power. Realizing the menace of such trends, the state has attempted to suppress them by passing laws, and to differentiate so-called destructive sects and traditional religious movements. This has raised many questions about the criteria for dividing religious movements and about the usage and interpretation of different terms, including the understanding of such notions as radicalism and traditionalism.

The research results demonstrated that only a small number of Muslim organizations, registered and non-registered, are involved in social activity such as reconstruction of schools, kindergartens, roads, or charity activity. Activity of many organizations aim to call people to faith.

The researchers made a number of recommendations addressed to public authorities, international organizations and the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan. In particular, recommendations were given to simplify national legislation regulating activity of religious organizations engaged in charity. Muslim communities were recommended to actively publicize their social activities in public in order to strengthen trust between citizens and religious organizations, as the former is the main source of possible donations for religious organizations engaged in charity.

The researchers extend their gratitude to the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan for their help in conducting this study.

To download the executive summary of this research, please visit the website of the Social Research Center at [www.src.auca.kg](http://www.src.auca.kg).

by Aida Alymbaeva

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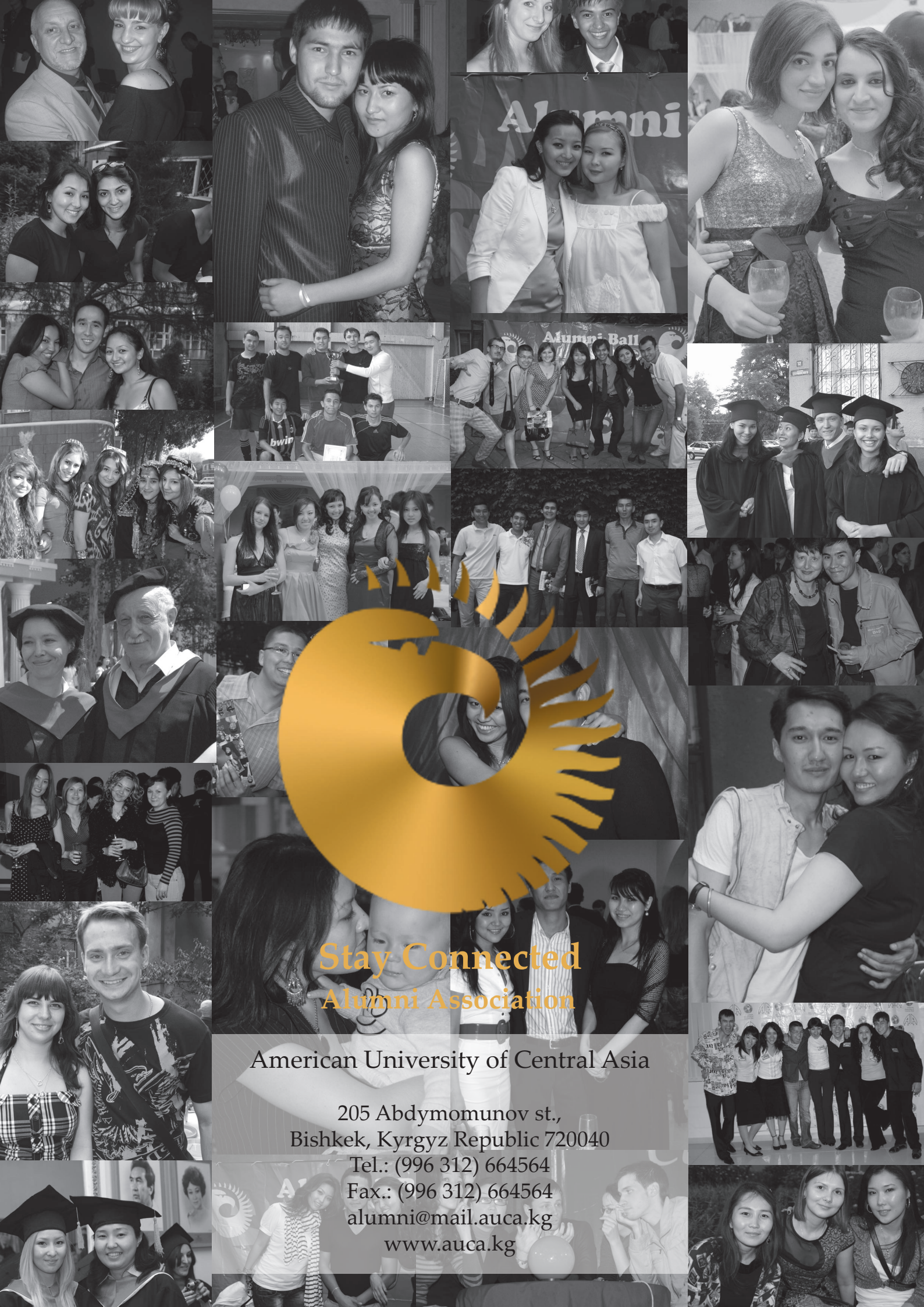
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