

AUCA Magazine



American University
of Central Asia

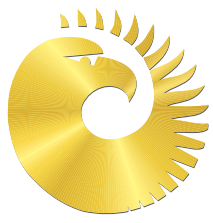
Spring 2010



Ellen Hurwitz: Deepening Our Mission and Vision

U.S. Accredited Degrees

Alumni Spotlight



*American University
of Central Asia*

AUCA

at a glance



AUCA develops enlightened and passionate leaders in an international, multi-disciplinary learning community. Our liberal arts curriculum is founded on the relentless commitment to academic excellence, critical inquiry and investigative learning. Our pursuit of enlightenment generates collaborative discussion and cultural exchange in the service of the democratic transformation of Central Asia.



Our programs include

Preparatory: Computer Basics, English, Math, Russian, Study Skills and TOEFL Preparation.

Undergraduate:

- American Studies
- Anthropology
- Business Administration
- Economics
- European Studies
- International and Comparative Politics
- Journalism and Mass Communication
- International and Business Law
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Software Engineering

Graduate: AUCA offers a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

Languages offered: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Kyrgyz, Russian and Spanish.

American University of Central Asia values responsible freedom in the search for truth and justice. We are honest, self-critical, and respectful. We cherish critical inquiry and investigative learning both for their own sake and for the development of an open, diverse and just society that suits the region in which we learn and serve.

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Photo: Chris Kendall



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Deepening Our Mission and Vision



AUCA Magazine sprang from the minds of alumni and was envisioned to convey the spirit of AUCA and to serve as a voice for our friends. What you will find on the pages of this issue of *AUCA Magazine* is our attempt to showcase what it really means to study at the dynamic liberal arts university that blends the cultures of Central Asia with the educational traditions of the United States, Europe and Russia.

In these exciting and challenging times the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) continues to take the high

and long road to the pursuit of academic excellence. The university faces a smooth leadership transition. This is the period of significant changes taking place at AUCA, and we are excited to have a chance to share them with you, our faithful readers.

Since AUCA is a very special place, the content of this magazine is special as well. Excitingly, there were many things to cover. This year AUCA became the first and only university in Central Asia that will award degrees fully accredited in the United States. This is a result of a formal partnership being established between AUCA and Bard College in New York. Such synergy will reinforce the continuing AUCA efforts in designing the curriculum of the future and shaping its liberal arts approach to education values. On the pages of this *AUCA Magazine* you will find articles that touch on a range of issues, from how migration is explored through photography to what amazing things AUCA alumni have achieved.

Of course, this celebratory issue would not be complete without an interview with Ellen S. Hurwitz, AUCA President and the architect of AUCA's liberal arts vision. Dr. Hurwitz reflects on her five years in the Office and on the significant changes that happened in AUCA during her tenure.

Today, as the AUCA eagle is trying its wings, we have yet to see the full extent of the great things that our young university will achieve. One thing I am sure of, though, is that AUCA will continue to produce graduates devoted to the development of an open, diverse and just society who will contribute to their countries.

Enjoy this very special issue and stay in touch!

*Kemel Toktomushev,
Editor-in-Chief
AUCA '08*

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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On the cover: Ellen S. Hurwitz with Sheroz Negmatov, Ahmed Tagiev and Hadija Murtazalieva.

Reflecting on Five Years in the Office of the President

I welcome the opportunity to reflect on the progress our University has made over the past five years. I truly believe we have come a long way! We are a gifted community with exceptional individuals who confront exciting and difficult challenges with tenacity and creativity. We take risks, bridge cultures and civilizations, and push the boundaries of knowledge and thought.

From our very inception AUK was an experimental institution seeking to be a distinctively Kyrgyz entity with some important American features. Our daring faculty and staff attracted bright and determined students and provided an excellent education in a range of subjects and disciplines. During our quest for independence and geographical reach and the shift from AUK to AUCA, however, we lost our balance a bit, such that some feared that our struggles might be ruinous.

But no! The wisdom of a united and creative Board of Trustees, a talented and dedicated faculty and staff, successful and caring graduates, and brilliant and committed young students assured the AUCA community and the world beyond it of our enduring strength. Over the last five years we have been actively building on our original mission and improving the way we function. As with any young institution, and most especially one in a developing country with a very diverse population, we are not always at one on all of the issues. But this tension is perfectly healthy. It has enabled us to chart our course with confidence and to generate substantial support for our long-term well being.

What has happened to enable us to be optimistic, even now as Kyrgyzstan undergoes its second major political



upheaval in five years? I believe that our University is coming of age in the ways that we govern ourselves, plan our activities and, most especially, develop the process of our learning.

Nearly six years ago, when I was considering the opportunity to lead this very special University, I noticed that each governing body at AUCA was struggling with issues of trust and style. There were many disparate dreams, but not one united dream. The ways of learning were neither clearly explained

nor adequately laid out. I thought I could bring to the University my experience in governance, planning and development. What made it possible for me to address these three areas was the willingness of all constituencies of the University to learn. AUCA really is a learning organization on a mission to provide excellent education to students who have the potential and the opportunity to bring major change to their worlds.

Our work together on governance, planning and curricu-

lum has been continuous, integrated and never dull. Today our University is governed by a Board of Trustees that works together, trusts one another and brings collective wisdom to crucial decision making about the University. It has been my pleasure to learn from this group of experienced and talented volunteers who give their time, talent and treasure to our University. The challenge of leading a University at the crossroads of so many cultures is really about finding the wisest way to frame the issues and interpret the concerns. The collaboration of the Board and President makes that happen. The Board has come light years in the way that it governs because the basic trust among the members enables it to clarify the issues that we need to confront.

Alongside the Board of Trustees we have developed the AUCA Foundation Board, which oversees our recently established 501c (3) charitable foundation where donors in the US make tax deductible contributions. We have also developed the AUCA Endowment Advisory Board, which is entrusted with the oversight of our endowment funds that are managed by the Indiana University Foundation. All three Boards are well aligned, with intentionally overlapping membership. Orchestrating these Boards has been both a challenge and a privilege because of the talent and experience of these wonderful volunteers who are helping our University to grow.

Our faculty and staff have also worked on internal University governance. The Academic Senate has become a very well organized and effective internal oversight group that brings together faculty, staff and students for academic policy issues

including curriculum and faculty development. Elections to the Academic Senate proceed transparently and smoothly, thanks to regulations for elections that members of our faculty designed and implemented. Ideas from the Academic Senate flow directly to the Board of Trustees not only through the President and other academic officers, but also directly from student and faculty Senate representatives.

As with the Board, so with the Academic and Student Senates a clear record of conversations and decisions is preserved. Academic Senate subcommittees likewise have developed clear agendas ranging from governance to mission to academic policy, curriculum development,

"We are a gifted community with exceptional individuals who confront exciting and difficult challenges with tenacity and creativity. We take risks, bridge cultures and civilizations, and push the boundaries of knowledge and thought."

student intellectual life, appeals, enrollment, and research and promotion. The committee on governance reviews the Academic Senate's committee structure, alignment, representation and calendar and makes wise changes regularly. The committee on mission and planning sharpens the mission, reviews the strategic plan, oversees institutional review and participates with the Board of Trustees in master planning. If three years ago it was impossible to conduct an Academic Senate meeting without pounding the gavel or ringing the bell to control what seemed like endless disrespectful sidebar conversations, nowadays we work together respectfully and with an enjoyable sense of humor.

The Student Senate is likewise a maturing institution with increasingly engaged representatives of the student body participating in student and overall University governance. Elections to this body have

traditionally taken place late in the fall, as a result of which student representation on University committees has been out of synch with the academic calendar. This spring, however, and for the first time, the Student Senate held elections with a view to having a new Student Senate up and running by the start of the next school year. These elections have taken place despite the political turmoil in Bishkek. Student Senators have been especially helpful this current year with curriculum revision and with our new partnership with Bard College. Indeed, we sent the President of the Student Senate to Bard and plan to send the winner of a Senate generated essay contest on the meaning of the liberal arts. Student Senators have pressed aggressively for budget transparency this year, and we have decided to share with our student and faculty leadership the annual operating budget.

The inclusive system of governance that we have been developing has enabled us to plan the future of our University. We have clarified the liberal arts mission, articulated our values and set goals to enhance our academic excellence and the reputation along with it that is so critical for fundraising and partnership development. The University now has a working strategic plan, and we have designed and developed a self-study that reveals our strengths and weaknesses and points the way for future planning and growth. We have clarified the assumptions in our operating budget such that we can propose wise policies for managing our tuition and fundraising on the revenue side, and our salary and financial aid policies on the spending side. We are designing and developing a campus plan for residential and classroom space that befits a liberal arts university in the heart of Central



"The wisdom of a united and creative Board of Trustees, a talented and dedicated faculty and staff, successful and caring graduates, and brilliant and committed young students assured the AUCA community and the world beyond it of our enduring strength."

Asia.

The governance and planning improvements speak to a better organized and functioning University and a community-wide understanding of how we function as a University. We still have a steep climb before us: a University with 1,200 students and an operating budget under \$4,000,000 is reaching for the stars with dimes in its pockets. But reach we do, knowing full well that enriching our coffers far more than we have in the last five years will improve morale and stabilize our workforce. Thanks to excellent grants management for funds recently received, we have begun to prove to ourselves and our donors that we have reliable mechanisms in place for responsible fund management and development.

Finally, I wish to reflect on the work of our faculty in curriculum development. It has been my greatest source of satisfaction to watch and encourage the dramatic improvements in our academic life. Of major importance has been the shift from 40 to 80 percent of

our courses taught in English, a very challenging and significant accomplishment for our faculty and for our students as well. Of comparable significance has been the development of interdisciplinary courses both at the freshman level and at the upper level. E-learning has also been progressing, most visibly in the joint courses we have held with American University of Afghanistan through our USAID funding curriculum development grant.

The willingness of our faculty to shift gears, change habits of mind and contribute to the maturation of our Liberal Arts University has made it possible for AUCA to become a partner with Bard College that will provide accredited degrees to our students in all but two of our majors, making us the first US accredited university in Central Asia.

Partnering with Bard has pressed us to redesign our orientation program, develop an interdisciplinary first-year seminar and put in place a senior thesis program. It has also encouraged



us to rethink our arts, mathematics and writing offerings. The Bard partnership is but one of several important relationships in the area of curriculum development including foundations and government agencies such as Soros, Mellon, Christian A. Johnson, Aga Khan, USAID and the US Department of State, and universities such as European College of the Liberal Arts, Bratislava Institute for the Study of the Liberal Arts, Central European University, Smolny College at Saint Petersburg State University, American Universities of Afghanistan and Bulgaria, Columbia University and Harvard. Our ability to be a good partner stems from our

original and still functioning partnership with Indiana University.

For the past several years we have been thinking about what it means to say that we are a liberal arts university. I have been pressed to define the liberal arts for the AUCA community and have, quite frankly, found it a challenge. I personally have been so steeped in the liberal arts tradition that I live and breathe it better than I define it. But I will share a few thoughts on this subject.

A liberal arts education frees the mind and develops an independent approach to learning and living. It includes breadth and depth with a range

of perspectives on any subject including areas of specialization. Indeed, breadth and depth are essential and mutually re-enforcing. Above all, the approach must be critical. Teachers in the liberal arts tradition facilitate dialogue and questions more than they tell people what they need to know; their expertise emerges through discussions and questions more than through straight lecturing. Students learn with and from faculty who are not sages on the stage but coaches on the side. It is also important to note that although American higher education lays claim to the design of the liberal arts college, in point of fact the liberal arts have been around since the time of Cicero in ancient Rome. Even before that the notion of a critical and informal learning style was fostered by Plato and Aristotle, the latter having been the teacher of Alexander the Great, who was no stranger to Central Asia!

AUCA's commitment to the liberal arts is still inchoate; it is cloudy and needs to clarify itself over time. I believe that it is the mix of educational cultures at the crossroads, Russian, European, Chinese, Turkish, Iranian, and, of course, American and Central Asian, joined together, that will help AUCA clarify what it means to be a multi-cultural liberal arts institution in the heart of Central Asia. Our capacity to listen to a range of ideas leads me to believe that our University, already great, will emerge from any clouds as glorious as a soaring eagle.

In return for the opportunity to lead the University over the last five years is the reward of a lifted spirit and an opened heart. In a few months' time I will step down as President. It will be my great honor to have helped set the stage for the greatness that will undoubtedly follow and to assist the University in the future.

Ellen S. Hurwitz, President

Bard College Accredited Degrees Awarded by AUCA

This year AUCA became the first and only university in Central Asia with the authority to award degrees that are accredited in the United States. At the March, 2010 meeting the AUCA Board of Trustees formally established the partnership with Bard College, an excellent liberal arts university located along the Hudson River in the State of New York in the United States.

Members of our junior class are preparing to meet the twin graduation requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and Bard College.

In June, 2011 students majoring in American Studies, Anthropology, Economics, European Studies, International and Comparative Politics, Journalism and Mass Communications, Psychology, Sociology and Software Engineering will receive both a Kyrgyz diploma and an AUCA diploma through Bard College. The remaining two, Business Administration and International and Business Law programs, stand out as the ones with more vocational/professional curriculum, requiring a different context for accreditation. Both programs, however, remain accredited in the Kyrgyz Republic, and we will be working on their international accreditation.

Getting AUCA degrees accredited in the United States has long been one of our principal goals. This goal was achieved through the goodwill of both Bard and AUCA administrations, great support from Open Society Institute and scrupulous negotiations on program curricula. We hope that this new partnership will develop into a long-term fraternal relationship between the two institutions.

"Our mission summons us to build a learning community that cherishes the exploration of ideas both for their own sake and for the development of our region. We are well on our way to designing the curriculum of the future," emphasized President Dr. Ellen Hurwitz.

Apart from a dual degree, the partnership with Bard College provides AUCA with an excellent chance to revisit and strengthen our curriculum and teaching in liberal arts traditions, in full accordance with our mission. Liberal arts education fosters the development of intellectual breadth and depth by cultivating open, critical and articulate framing of ideas and practices. We at AUCA understand education as a process of learning how to learn as opposed to acquainting students with pre-determined "true" knowledge.

We have currently been developing a set of new inter-disciplinary courses, both at introductory and upper levels, improving our senior thesis program, developing our student advising and other important aspects of educational experience.



Bard College, Annadale-on-Hudson, NY
Photo by Don Hamerman

AUCA is set to further transform its teaching into a student-centered process and produce students with knowledge and skills vital for their life-long development.

As our partnership with Bard College develops further, we will do our best to keep our students, parents, alumni and donors informed and engaged.

By Shairbek Juraev

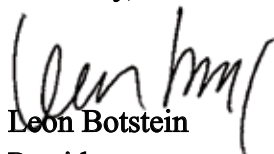
Bard College, founded in 1860, is a US-accredited college of the liberal arts and sciences. It is located in the Hudson Valley, two hours from New York City. Bard offers undergraduate degree in more than 40 academic programs, and currently has about 1600 students enrolled. Bard College is known as one of best liberal arts colleges in the USA, and in the words of its president Leon Botstein, it "urge[s] students to think about their place in the world and to develop a desire to participate from inside themselves."

Bard College

Office of the President

On behalf of the entire Bard College community, I extend to Ellen Hurwitz our deep gratitude for her inspired leadership of the American University of Central Asia. Over the past five years, Ellen's embrace of innovation, insistence on academic excellence, and promotion of the values of liberal education have assured AUCA's place as the leading university in the region. Equally praiseworthy, however, has been Ellen's unfailing care for the well-being of the university's greatest assets, its students. She is truly an international leader in higher education. We at Bard are particularly thankful to Ellen for laying a firm foundation for our partnership with AUCA, a collaboration that we anticipate will grow only stronger. Ellen's many contributions to AUCA will endure long after her tenure, benefiting the university and its students for many years to come.

Cordially,



Leon Botstein
President

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From Bishkek to Kabul and Back

After much anticipation, students of the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) have begun classes in the newly installed Video Conference Suite with classmates and professors from the American University in Afghanistan (AUAF). With the USAID support AUCA has become one of the first universities in CIS to install a special virtual classroom, equipped with the highest quality distance learning technology available in the world. AUCA and AUAF agreed on a five-year collaboration to develop real-time interactive distance courses.

The classes are held in specially equipped classrooms, where students in Bishkek and Kabul face each other through a large monitor, and are facilitated by two instructors, one at AUCA and another one at AUAF. All courses taught are multidisciplinary in their content and cover issues of major importance in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

"The main idea of the project is to build the collaborating learning environment using up-to-date technologies. Such partnership allows us to expand the classroom experience of students and to develop an interactive learning community across two campuses," emphasized Mehrigiul Ablezova, Academic Coordinator of AUCA-AUAF Collaboration Project and Assistant Professor of Sociology.

The results of the student assessment surveys revealed that the vast majority of students on both campuses like the use of such technology-mediated collaborative learning. Students value this new approach in learning, which goes beyond the boundaries of the university and the entire country.

Jahantab Faizi, AUCA senior student, was among the first who has experienced the advantages of the Virtual Room, "This is something new and exciting; it motivates us to learn and increases students' understanding of diversity and other cultures. Although it is only the technology, the class atmosphere is real."

Undoubtedly, both universities will have to continue to work hard to maintain connection from both sides and make sure that the students and staff have truly natural and dynamic academic experience. "We are using these new technologies to develop exciting learning opportunities for our students. Now we can establish academic, social and cross-cultural connections all around the world", commented Sania Battalova, AUCA Director of Information Resources and Technology

Robert Anderson, the Head of AUCA Business Administration department, agreed that the most exciting aspect of such courses is that they are delivered through a combination of traditional teaching methods and new technology. "These different perspectives, questions, and issues that are raised by students' classmates from another country bring in different unique flavor and create special atmosphere during the coursework," emphasized Mr. Anderson.

AUCA and AUAF have become the pioneers with a technological system that has no match in the region and which will surely set an example for other universities to follow. For the future, the two universities envision partnerships with renowned higher education institutions worldwide.

By Kemel Toktomushev



EMBASSY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BISHKEK

April 17, 2010

Office of the Ambassador

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Ellen since I became U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. I will always value the time that we spent together in Kyrgyzstan, working together to foster a respect for democracy and human rights in Central Asia.

As President of the American University of Central Asia, Ellen was able to help shape the minds of the young people in the region and beyond who will be the leaders of tomorrow. Everywhere I go in Kyrgyzstan, I run into alumni of AUCA who express to me their appreciation for the valuable American style education they received.

Ellen has been a true friend and partner in our work here in Central Asia and I will always treasure the time we have spent together. There is no person with a keener mind, truer heart, nor deeper soul than Ellen!

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tatiana Gfoeller', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Tatiana Gfoeller
Ambassador



Individual Freedom and Social Responsibility

To enhance students' understanding of the University's mission and introduce the notion of responsible freedom as a core value of liberal education at AUCA, President Ellen Hurwitz proposed the creation of an interdisciplinary theme-based, upper-level course two years ago. Faculty from philosophy, social sciences and humanities were invited to design a syllabus. The Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation provided a grant to shape and pilot this course.

One of the goals is to develop students' understanding that since freedom cannot exist in society in a vacuum, individual freedom involves social responsibility. The course is unique in that it explores responsible freedom comparatively from three cultural perspectives: Western European/American, Russian and Central Asian. It also examines common and distinctive elements in order to construct bridges for international dialogue and frameworks for democratic and social development.

The major themes of the course are explored through selected readings and films. Among them are "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Mill's *On Liberty*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*, Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Berlin's *Four Essays on Liberty*, and Obama's inaugural address.

Representing the Russian cultural tradition

are Bakunin's *Marxism, Freedom, and the State*, Berdyaev's *Freedom and the Spirit*, Aksakov's *On Internal State of Russia*, Dostoevsky's *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* and Prince Gortchakoff's "Dispatch to Russian Representatives Abroad", and President Putin's *Munich Speech*.

The Central Asian segment includes Balasaguni's *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, Aitmatov's *Legend of Mankurt* and the Kyrgyz epic *Kojojash*.

Among the classic films in the course are Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men*, Mikhalkov's *12* and Kramer's *Inherit the Wind*, as well as Kyrgyz classics represented by Ubukeyev's *Difficult Crossing*. Two documentary films about important events in recent Kyrgyz history were shown. One is "Farewell" directed by Elnura Osmonalieva, an AUCA alumna.

One of the major discoveries that has emerged is that all of the cultural traditions the course examines share in the quest for responsible freedom. The lessons derived from this curricular experience suggest that if freedom is not the result of a well developed sense of civic responsibility, it can be dangerous. Only the cultivation of thoughtful and responsible freedom will allow the sustainable development of democratic institutions that suit the region.

By Makhinur Mamatova



April 21, 2010

Dear friends of AUCA:

Ellen changed my life.

I met Ellen about a year ago at a conference for liberal arts colleges. I had not heard of the American University of Central Asia until then, but her enthusiasm and love for AUCA made me eager to learn more. I was excited when Ellen invited me to visit AUCA last September and to work together on creating a campus master plan.


Working with Ellen provides a rare and delightful experience of being challenged, taught, mentored, hosted and amused all at once. Ellen's work ethic and devotion to AUCA is 24/7. Her email responses are instantaneous and directives always on target. She's a big thinker with a big heart. Most of all, I noticed that she is extraordinarily proud and respectful of AUCA, its students, faculty, board and staff. The tradition of Kyrgyz hospitality is embodied in Ellen. Available tea and sweets are part of her office décor.

Working with Ellen and AUCA has opened my eyes to a larger world getting smaller. She has advanced my understanding of liberal arts learning and how to design for 21st century students. Ellen's request to me to create places for "moveable conversations" captures the current ethos of learning and drives the campus master planning.

The extent to which Ellen has changed my life pales to how much Ellen has helped change the lives of thousands of young people in becoming (as the AUCA mission states), "the ... leaders for the democratic transformation of Central Asia."

Ellen's advocacy for freedom and responsibility is part of her legacy at the university. She may be retiring from the presidency but not from her sense of responsibility to AUCA. I wish her more success and happiness.

Sincerely,



Henry Myerberg

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Developing Central Asian Humanities

The development of the Central Asia Humanities curriculum results from President Ellen Hurwitz's initiative and support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The syllabi of the History of Central Asia and Literature and the Arts of Central Asia courses were developed through planning and elaboration on themes, materials and teaching styles of a dynamic and in-

Literature and Arts of Central Asia course was developed. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and President Hurwitz provided continuous intellectual and financial support, as well as challenging us, which led to the effective transformation of the university curriculum development process.

The curriculum development project took more than three years and resulted in two

The curriculum development project took more than three years and resulted in two year-long courses, four committed faculty members, and an increasingly enriched Central Asian collection of print and audio-visual resources.

novative group of professors and scholars, students and instructors who teach these courses.

Faculty from different programs participated in the year-long preparation and design of both syllabi. President Hurwitz led faculty, students, staff and visiting scholars from Central Asia and the United States in the design of History of Central Asia, the first of the two upper-level courses. A year later the

year-long courses, four committed faculty members, and an increasingly enriched Central Asian collection of print and audio-visual resources. The project has an interdisciplinary, student-centered, theme based approach with team-teaching and interactivity among participants.

Currently, the Central Asian Humanities group continues to expand and enhance the curriculum through fac-

ulty development. Two faculty members are developing a new First Year Seminar course to share the experience with 15 other colleagues. This new course will transform the AUCA freshman sequence on critical thinking and research methods from a lecture-style discipline-based approach to a student-centered interdisciplinary approach. The syllabus for this course is designed to incorporate teaching components mentioned above.

Being challenging and exciting this initiative also always recognizes that there will be the need to improve and expand. This pledge is assisted by the Mellon Foundation commitment to assisting AUCA in enhancing its liberal arts curriculum.

Plans include development of additional new faculty who will work to refine Central Asian Humanities syllabi, teach the program and develop new course ideas. Plans also include the involvement of motivated and responsible students who can contribute their insights and ideas to syllabus improvement. Regularly visiting international scholars will provide their writing and humanities expertise and resources collection and list of scholarly work reflecting the progress will be

expanded.

Overall, the project is a part of the AUCA mission to strengthen its liberal arts curriculum. All of the improvements launched by the university to fulfill this mission are based on continuous assessment of potential benefits that may come with the transformation of the AUCA academic community.

By Mary Bernadette Conde

Working with Fairfield University

The US-Central Asia Education Foundation (CAEF) and American Councils for International Education (ACCELS) brought together AUCA, KIMEP and Fairfield University from the US to plan a unique Faculty Development Program. More than 20 faculty and administrators from AUCA and KIMEP will undergo a unique state-of-the-art Faculty Development Program for the two years. Fairfield University was selected out of the top 25 universities in the US to deliver these workshops.

Dr. Zarylbek Kudabaev, Chair of Economics, Ajara Beishembaeva, Acting Chair of MBA Programme, and Natalia Slastnikova, Executive Director of Continuing Education, will help plan the sessions with the Dean of Bang College of Business Dr. Sang Hoon Lee of KIMEP and some of their top administrators. This Faculty Development Program is aimed exclusively at Business Administration and Economics faculty.

The Fairfield training curriculum will focus on Teaching Methodology, Course and Resource Development, Peer Review and Mentoring, Educational Technology, and Business Content and Business Education in the United States.

The meeting took place in Almaty at the KIMEP campus over a period of three days. Dr. David McFadden, Fairfield University's Project Director, said he was delighted at the response of the teams from AUCA and KIMEP. At the end of three days he said he was confident of future collaboration with AUCA in the areas of joint research projects, specifically in the Central Asia region, joint conferences and possible student and faculty exchange in the near future.

The Fairfield Professors met with President Ellen Hurwitz and Vice President for Academic Affairs Bermet Tursunkulova during their visit to AUCA on February 4, 2010. They said they were very impressed with new Polycom Video Conferencing Unit installed in library building. Sania Battalova, the director of IT and Library, gave them a demonstration of how the system works.

Dr. McFadden has since invited Ajara Beishembaeva to visit Fairfield in late May 2010 as part of this new partnership and collaboration. She will represent AUCA in this first round of the Faculty Development Program. Ajara Beishembaeva will be participating in round tables focusing on culture and the link to languages and in the Fairfield Summer Conference organized by the Center of Academic Excellence from June 2-4, 2010.

The first session of the Faculty Development Program is scheduled to take place in Bishkek for three days and finish at Issykul for two days from June 25-30, 2010. The topics for Session One include Strategic Management and Financial Decision Making as main themes followed by sessions on case study writing and best practices for alternative pedagogies for faculty to consider in their teaching strategies among many others.

Fairfield University is constructing a website exclusively for this project with different technologies such as Moodle, Blackboard, Skype and Google. Class sessions between AUCA and Fairfield are being planned using video conferencing.

By Robert Anderson



Indiana University Partnership: Old Masterpieces in Modern Frames

"Heritage, Tourism and Museums in Kyrgyzstan" symposium was organized by the AUCA and Indiana University Anthropology Departments and took place in Kyrgyzstan on December 12-18, 2009.

Museums are unique worlds of secrets and memories, of histories and traditions and contain things both magic and common. Kyrgyzstan is a home to 36 state museums, which like any other museums cannot exist without the visitors.

"The main idea of this symposium was to attract tourists and investments and to promote conservation and development of historical and archaeological sites and museums in Kyrgyzstan in joint efforts with the government, archaeologists, tourist agencies and, most importantly, local residents," – emphasized Aida Abdykanova, Head of the Anthropology Department of AUCA.

The first part of the symposium was held in Bishkek, whereas the second and third parts took place in Issyk-Kul and in the Kochkor village respectively.

"Such venues for the symposium were not chosen by chance. Our special guests were ea-

ger to share their expertise and knowledge with local residents and common cause enthusiasts on how to obtain financial aid for the maintenance and preservation of valuable cultural and historical sites," denoted Aida Abdykanova.

Among the special guests were Dr. Anne Pyburn, Professor of Anthropology of Indiana University and Director of the Center for Archaeology in the Public Interest; Michael Frachetti, Assistant Professor of Archaeology of Washington University in St. Louis; Sarah Brophy, museum management specialist; Dr. Rex Garniewicz, Director of Collections and Curator of Prehistoric Archaeology of Indiana State Museum; Dr. Caroline Beebe, digital library consultant; Dr. George S. Smith, Registered Professional Archaeologist and Associate Director of the Southeast Archeological Center.

"We hope that this symposium was of great value for the participants and our community, and more and more people will care about the preservation of historical and cultural heritages of our Kyrgyzstan," concluded Aida Abdykanova.

By Kemel Toktomushev

INDIANA UNIVERSITY



OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT

Ellen Hurwitz has been an exceptional president of the American University of Central Asia. Under her strong leadership, this fine institution has continued to thrive and has also moved in innovative new directions. She has created new administrative structures that have greatly benefited the university. Above all, President Hurwitz has been deeply committed to the needs of AUCA students. She made every effort to bring in the best teachers, to create new academic programs and to maintain the high quality and reputation of the university. She has also been well aware that AUCA needs to be part of a wider global network and she has strengthened relationships in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Congratulations to President Hurwitz on her great achievements.

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*American
University
of Central Asia*

Dear Ellen,

Thank you for what you have achieved in your five years at the helm of AUCA. During the time between your welcoming revolution and your farewell revolution you have kept a steady hand on the tiller. The ship had had its rocky moments before your arrival, but your patient understanding and good humour brought calm. And in the calm you created you changed the direction of the ship so smoothly that it takes an effort of the imagination to realize that we were not always going in the direction we now are.

“Liberal Arts” was a word much bandied about but you have given it content. We now have a concept that animates the community, gives direction to our endeavours, and stimulates constructive debate about the nature of education and its role in the community. You energetically engaged various foundations with AUCA and used their support to enable faculty to develop new curricula such as Central Asian Studies. You developed a mutually beneficial partnership with Bard College. From next year, the graduating class will receive accredited US diplomas in addition to the Kyrgyz diplomas. We salute you for making AUCA the first university in Central Asia to have this recognition.

I want also to say how much I have enjoyed working with you. No matter what the time of day; no matter how many time zones you have traversed that day; no matter what exasperations you have faced, you are of good cheer. You are a gracious and generous host of students, faculty and board members. Honesty requires me to add that working with you is a challenge for you are the world’s champion when it comes to turning around emails. For a while I had the disturbing thought that you correctly anticipated the content of my emails and had already composed a reply and hit the send button before I had dispatched my email. But then I realized that there is a simpler hypothesis: your emails are tachyons travelling faster than the speed of light.

Enjoy your retirement from the presidency of AUCA. I know that it is not going to be a real retirement. Your commitment to your university means you will be championing our cause elsewhere. Thank you in anticipation.

W.H. Newton Smith,
Chair, Board of Trustees of AUCA



Ellen Hurwitz: Deepening Our Mission and Vision

by Jamby Djusubalieva

Ellen, you came to the AUCA leadership a bit more than five years ago. Looking back, how did you find the University? What were your primary challenges?

When I came to the University more than five years ago, AUCA was recovering from a difficult struggle among the leadership reflecting, I believed, a deeper issue about our American and Central Asian identity. I decided to focus on the institutional vision and find people who would help to clarify that vision.

It was a joy to work with wise and strong individuals, deeply united in their commitment to learning. Once we became mission-driven, the leadership struggle subsided and the search for our mission began to carry the day. We set to work on the intellectual challenges before us, leaving political challenges to the government and outside the University.

So the real, strategic challenge here in AUCA is intellectual rather than political?

University politics are at best a distraction and at worse a very destructive force. I decided to get everyone

to the table to talk about the idea of a university and the idea of AUCA, about its distinctiveness, its strategic value as a school that mixes American and Central Asian ideas and its creation at a critical geographical, cultural and intellectual crossroads. We got general agreement on that approach and began to move forward in making AUCA a better place!

It was about that time that you came to the idea of liberal arts?

The idea of liberal arts was not a new one at AUCA – it had been there for a good while! When I came to AUCA, I heard several references to the idea that “we are following the American model of the liberal arts.”

But these felt like slogans that seemed to lack thoughtful understanding. The words had been used, but their implications had not been deeply discussed. And so we set out to probe the depths of these words. Even our approach to the credit-hour system seemed superficial. I heard that we instituted a credit-hour system so that students would be able to pick the courses they wanted. “Aha,” I thought. “So that’s what we mean by

"Kamila had the intelligence and intuition to establish the University and to select an American president to lead it together with her. She recognized that we need American as well as Kyrgyz leadership to make an American style university work."

the liberal arts model: choosing the courses one wants! But choosing on what basis? Whimsy? Thoughtful reflection?"

I came to realize that our intuitively freedom-loving, dynamic young school was a bit cavalier in its terminology and its notion of choice. So it seemed clear that we needed to deepen our understanding of our shared mission.

As I understand, everyone was involved...

It was an interesting process including formal and informal meetings, some right here in my house, with some faculty who

had been within University since it had started and with students and staff as well. We did it together, working on mission, governance, planning, and student intellectual life. We found common ground. Similarly we found it in the Academic Senate and the Board – common ground and mutual trust.

The idea of the liberal arts was always there. But no one had fleshed out what that expression meant, especially for our University. The tendency was toward specialization. Indeed, everybody wanted to specialize more and more and to create graduate programs right away. But the undergraduate curriculum was unformed at that stage. It was a collection of departments without common ground and a deep sense of a university. Even our general education seemed more a collection of obligatory courses than an integrated search for knowledge and values. Essentially the challenge was to build the very idea of a university.

Did you feel a resistance of some faculty?

Not active resistance, but there was scepticism about the implications of pursuing the liberal arts dream, focussing on ideas more than skills and changing the primary language of instruction into English in order to prepare our students and faculty for interaction on a global scale. Engaged discussion about disagreements is very healthy. A liberal arts point of view is fundamentally about challenging assumptions and even authority itself. So, when people argue that specialization is the true goal of an undergraduate education and that liberal arts are superficial and opposed to specialization, I welcome the challenge to discuss it.

In an undergraduate environment there can be deep thought within any specialisation as





long as that specialisation is not isolated, but rather integrated into a university-wide dialogue. I think there has not been enough dialogue about the liberal arts in some parts of the University, and certainly not enough discussion among the various specializations. Now that we are maturing our curriculum, pockets of isolation are being eroded but they remain.

So what is essential to understand about that idea?

Really important is that the liberal arts are not a superficial smorgasbord of learning without depth, but rather a process of analysis of the deepest things. It can be argued that Albert Einstein was a liberal arts thinker. After all he challenged assumptions across all physics and math. And he reinvented the way we view the world. He invented an approach to space, time and energy that was at once specialized and universal. The juxtaposition of

specialized analysis with the liberal arts is specious and the result of narrow specialization. From the depths should always emerge the broader picture.

What about the “revolution” of integration with Bard College and how the idea came about?

It is a difficult challenge to bridge the expectations of the Ministry of Education in Bishkek with those of a US accredited liberal arts college. Actually the idea of partnering with Bard was the brainchild of three very wise men: Leon Botstein, President of Bard; Bill Newton-Smith, Chair of our Board of Trustees; and George Soros. My challenge was to make that great idea fit AUCA. I was encouraged by Bard’s effort to give birth to Russia’s first liberal arts college at Smolny, Saint Petersburg State University.

I thought that if the partnership could work at Smolny, then why not at AUCA? First I was sceptical because if you are

“I came to realize that our intuitively freedom-loving, dynamic young school was a bit cavalier in its terminology and its notion of choice. So it seemed clear that we needed to deepen our understanding of our shared mission.”

"It was a joy to work with wise and strong individuals, deeply united in their commitment to learning. Once we became mission-driven, the leadership struggle subsided and the search for our mission began to carry the day. We set to work on the intellectual challenges before us, leaving political challenges to the government and outside the University."

trained in the liberal arts, you have to be sceptical. Then I returned to Bard and was favorably impressed with how the school had been transformed since the '60s when I had first gone there for a visit. But I was concerned, and still am, that our programs in Business Administration and International and Business Law will not be accredited through Bard since there are no such programs offered there. And Bard is concerned as well and wants to help us address this challenge. Bard and AUCA are not a perfect fit, but AUCA stands to grow intellectually from a partnership with a liberal arts college that believes in both academic rigor and the search for new knowledge.

And those geniuses... you were among them?

No, I was not part of the original discussion. It was their idea. As I said, I came to see the wisdom of it, though, and had to figure out how AUCA could adjust to the great idea. It was not the most perfect fit, but it was a strategic fit that would facilitate a deeper focus on the liberal arts. Business Administration and International and Business Law are two of our most popular majors that at-

tract some of our most talented students. I think there is an opportunity is to enrich these programs through the partnership in ways to be determined. In a perfect world, I suppose, everything would fit neatly. Now we have to figure out what, if anything, we should do to get these programs accredited. The main thing is that the partnership with Bard has encouraged us to focus more deeply on the liberal arts and on the pursuit of ideas that can change the world.

Ellen, how would you describe your work as the President of AUCA?

I provide as much advice as I can and do a lot of planning and problem solving. And a whole lot of editing! I am trying my best to encourage all to keep pushing forward. I had the feeling that AUCA was an unplanned environment with a rich array of spontaneous ideas. We had a spontaneous birth. Well, almost! That's OK, but then you have to grow up, and the trick is to grow up without growing stale. Right now we realize that in order to meet all Ministry of Education and Bard requirements, we will have little room in our students' schedule for independent elective courses. I need to help the University figure out how to satisfy the educational expectations of both cultures and preserve its intellectual freedom. So I worry with my colleagues about whether we are overly structuring ourselves in order for East to meet West. Perhaps the answer lies in a more flexible approach to the way we teach our courses. We are working on finding that flexibility within ourselves and our programs.

Don't you think it can go together?

If you try to meet the requirements of two different systems in one "freedom loving" place, you get a little constrained!





It is true. Seems obvious...

I worry about the pressure on our students who must cope with that constraint every day. We need to manage the risk of bridging cultures without hampering intellectual freedom. In this sense my role is to highlight the issue and help solve it with appropriate constituencies on campus. That is what I am doing.

I think you are succeeding doing that...

Sometimes, yes, sometimes I wish I could do more.

Ellen, you know, that the existence and beginning of our University is tightly connected to the name of Kamila Sharshekeeva, first Provost of the AUCA...

Kamila had the intelligence and intuition to establish the University and to select an American president to lead it together with her. She recognized that we need American as well as Kyrgyz leadership to make an

American style university work. Shared leadership requires a superb rapport between the two sides regardless of who is President and who is Provost or Vice President. Strong leadership is essential.

You mean “dvoevlastie”?

Yes, I suppose so, but the focus should not be on “vlast” but on leadership. It is important to share leadership but to know who has the final authority. In a place like AUCA, on the crossroads of so many cultures, this collaboration is terribly important, but so, finally, is the clarity that only the President reports directly to the Board of Trustees

Leaving AUCA, how would you assess her role?

Kamila started it all. She is the mother of the University! And the mother never stops being the mother. And it’s the brilliance of the idea, and then its implementation without which there would be no University. You know when I first came to Kyr-

gyzstan in the ‘80s I visited one of the pedagogical institutes in then Frunze. And you could feel the thirst for the international presence, and the respect for Americans. I remember that. It was really a brilliant and timely idea that Kamila and those with her had. They were wise women and men, too, who saw the opportunity to create an American University.

So, do you think the University is a harmonious place now?

Actually I do. We may not have perfect harmony, and Americans may be more comfortable with the liberal arts than those who studied here in Central Asia, but I think there is growing common ground. But I also think that there is always a danger of a split if there is not enough sensitivity to differences of opinion. I think that if relationships within the Board and between the President and Vice President for Academic Affairs are trusting, then all will

be well. I have been fortunate this way. Working with Bakyt Beshimov was an honor, and now with Bermet Tursunkulova it is a great joy. Both are brilliant and well educated change agents steeped in Kyrgyz tradition and acutely aware of the opportunity for intensive exposure to Western and American educational ideas and practice.

Ellen, sorry to press you so much about the old days. I think we are haunted sometimes by some memories in times of change...

Of course! Remember the issue is really about respecting cultural differences. We have different histories with exposure to different ideas, and the challenge is to blend them creatively and sensitively. It is an intellectual and psychological challenge to blend our cultures and to build a liberal arts university that is both American and Central Asian. We should not allow differences to impede this great mission. The atmosphere is "gemutlich," and most respect one another. There is good camaraderie in the Board, in the Academic Senate, in the faculty and staff and among the students. No big battles.

I perfectly agree. Now, let's talk about students. Have they changed during your years here?

I don't see dramatic change over the five years in the nature of the student body. I had more time in the beginning of my presidency to get to know the students than I had later because of the intensity of what I do. The brightness of their eyes, the work ethic, the effectiveness of the learning environment all lead to easy matriculation into graduate school and access to careers. All of this speaks to a very healthy academic environment. I think we have be-

come more student-centered, although we may be a little less experimental than we were five years ago.

Now, for example, all students are required to do a senior thesis. It is totally different and demands more structure. I think our students are immensely creative, but I also think that they come to us just as bright but less well trained than five years ago, and that is a reflection of the education they have been able to receive more than anything else. The economic situation is inherently more stressful as well such that students often have to work long hours just to be able

"We have different histories with exposure to different ideas, and the challenge is to blend them creatively and sensitively. It is an intellectual and psychological challenge to blend our cultures and to build a liberal arts university that is both American and Central Asian."

to afford their tuition. Despite changes in the times, we have a wonderful and academically engaged student body!

Are they very different from the American students?

I guess the motivation to learn is higher here than in the US. Central Asian students know that doing well in school will make their lives better, indeed that the very quality of their life is at stake. American students take more for granted, thinking "Oh well, I'll be OK!" At the same time, students in America don't have the 3,000-year experience and are in some ways more naïve. Yet they are incredibly entrepreneurial and inventive.

What about the American style, "academic honesty" policy?

Oh, yes. Americans are taught from grade school not to cheat or copy other people's ideas without attribution. American University of Central Asia develops in our students a deep awareness of the negative value of cheating. But this does not mean some students do not bring to AUCA habits from the society around them: to copy somebody else's ideas without attribution or to attempt to achieve a better grade by flattering a professor. We are 99 percent there, but we must remain vigilant and wise in our policies. And so must American universities.

Ellen, do you have any regrets?

Of course! I didn't transform the University as fully as I would have liked. But I know well that it is not that easy! I see how much we have improved our governance, our curriculum and our partnerships and funding sources. I am very pleased with how much I have done,

but I always wish I could be doing more.

What makes you proud as you leave?

That AUCA is growing up! I am deeply proud to hand over a more mature institution to my successor who will be able to deepen our liberal arts mission and continue our remarkable journey. I have tried to make AUCA a contemporary university that has practices and ideas aligned with our commitment to develop students who address their academic and personal freedom responsibly and actively. I think we have grown significantly in this area and we will continue to grow in years to come.

By Jamby Djusubaliev





*American
University
of Central Asia*

Dear Ellen,

We, the members of the Board of Trustees of AUCA, wish to express our personal thanks to you for your leadership and to pay tribute to your vision for this university and your commitment to its faculty, staff, trustees, and above all to its students. Thank you, Ellen, congratulations, and godspeed.

Ishenbai Abdurazakov

Dede Bartlett

Jonathan Becker

Almas Chukin

Emita Hill

Scott Horton

Aidan Karibjanov

Stanislav Karpovich

Djoomart Otorbaev

Ulan Sarbanov

William Newton-Smith, Chair

Marat Tazabekov, Former Chair

Women of Valor

Humira Noorestani is an Afghan-American born and raised in the United States. Her grandfather was a military general during the Soviet invasion and was imprisoned for two years for opposing the Communist regime. Humira's parents found the asylum in the United States, where her father became the Afghanistan Representative to the United States and worked closely with President Reagan.

Humira's family background made her return to Afghanistan inevitable. Since the age of 16, Humira has been quoted and profiled by the likes of The Washington Post, The Washington Diplomat, Fox News, and Russia Today. In 2003 Humira represented Afghanistan, for

the first time in its history, at the Congressional Women's Club, together with representatives from ninety other nations.

Upon graduating from the American University in Washington D.C. with a degree in International Relations she visited Afghanistan for the first time, fulfilling her lifetime dream. She started a non-profit organization to advocate better communication and cooperation between the US and Afghanistan and to launch such development projects as the first computer training center for female judges in Afghanistan. Humira's work received recognition in a form of many awards, including the Congressional Recognition.

Now she is learning Russian in Kyrgyzstan and obtaining a law degree at AUCA, while her father is serving as a diplomat in Kazakhstan.

"Since studying Law is very expensive in the United States, where I was always being pressured to get married, it was almost impossible for me to study there. Instead I chose to gain international experience and learn Russian," comments Humira.

Humira actively participates in various AUCA activities such as Diversity Week dances and the *AUCA Magazine*. Next year Humira will be doing her Masters of Law at the University of Pennsylvania and has been named the Human Right Scholar for the class of 2010. Humira plans to continue being a conduit between the East and West and maybe, one day, will become the first female Supreme Court Judge in Afghanistan.

The list of ambitious Afghani women does not end with Humira. Suhailla Khyber, an OSCE scholarship student, is another

woman who wants to make a difference in Afghanistan. Suhailla vividly remembers Taliban seizure of her part of Kabul in 1995, when she was a student in the 9th grade. Her final exams were at first delayed and then cancelled altogether. "At first people were hopeful," she said. The Taliban, people thought, would provide stability and end the ethnic fighting that had ravaged the country for years.

The disappointment and frustration that followed made Suhailla feel sick. She realized that the only way for her to get better was through helping others. For three years, Suhailla taught young girls in hidden classrooms. If there were reports of Taliban activity in her neighborhood she was postponing classes for a week or two – under the Taliban regime her activities were absolutely illegal. "It was a big issue, because my family was scared of the Taliban," she said. "If I had been caught, I would have been thrown in jail."

Students like Suhailla come to AUCA because of their crave for education and have sacrificed a great deal to be here. They want to learn about democratic principles, return home and teach



Humira Noorestani with Laura Bush



Suhailla Khyber

others. Suhailla graduated from AUCA with honors and now constantly urges donors to sponsor more Afghan students – especially women, who have only recently acquired the opportunity to pursue their education.

Another woman of valor at AUCA is Nargiza Sydykova from Kyrgyzstan. Nargiza is an ethnic Uzbek and was born in a small village in the south of Kyrgyzstan, close to the city of Osh. She was always at the top of her class. She realized that the education level and living standards in her village were incomparable to those in Bishkek. At best, she would have studied at Osh State University had she stayed behind.

The opportunity Nargiza longed for arrived when she went to study in the US for a year through FLEX student exchange program. However, it was by no means an easy ride. While in the US she realized that she was not quite “the best”. She had difficulties communicating with others due to a language barrier, which damaged her self esteem. Once back in Kyrgyzstan she tried her best to improve herself and decided to try entering AUCA. Her parents were rather skeptical about her chances to gain entry into such a highly competitive institution. But Nargiza was determined to give it a try not to have any regrets later. She was utterly delighted when she passed the entry exams and attained a scholarship that was reasonable enough for her and her family. Nikolai Shulgin, Dean of Student Affairs, took note of her talents and persuaded her to join in activities such as the Drama Club. Nargiza was very active in her freshman and sophomore years and served on the Student Senate and participated in many fundraisers for orphanages through the FLEX Alumni Office.

Nargiza is now viewed as somewhat of an icon in her small village which has only three others who visited the US. In the neighboring city of Osh she has

come to be known as “the smart girl who speaks excellent English.” She hopes to travel more in search of a place that she could call “home”.

Nargiza now realizes that law, although being her major, is not her only focus. She wants to continue helping people and thus she hopes to obtain a Masters degree in law with a focus on Human Rights. Nargiza would like to give back to her community. She hopes to start a foundation that will work to promote gender rights, as in the south of Kyrgyzstan it is a dire issue that needs to be addressed.

When asked about how her life could have been differed if she never entered AUCA or visited the US, Nargiza replied that she would have been an ordinary girl with an ordinary life and probably married already – “I don’t have rich parents; I have to achieve everything on my own.”

Lidia Chikalova is the epitome of a woman of valor. Once having completed the ninth grade of school, which constitutes graduation in Turkmenistan, Lidia went to the US for a year, also through the FLEX program. While in Wisconsin Lidia won the statewide DECA Business Club competition with her business plan, and came third in a nationwide competition that followed.

After leaving the US, Lidia faced many obstacles and was unable to enter college in Turkmenistan due to extremely high



Lidia Chikalova



Nargiza Sydykova

tuition fees and her lack of Turkmen language knowledge. She worked in two jobs simultaneously – as a receptionist and as a technical translator. While working, Lidia was volunteering at an orphanage and a psychiatric hospital and started a summer sports camp, the first in her city.

Later, she was admitted to the Journalism and Mass Communication Program at AUCA, which she received a scholarship for. While at the university Lidia continued to receive multiple other scholarships and internships and traveled to Spain and Dubai. Since there are no journalism schools in Turkmenistan, Lidia feels especially fortunate to be studying in Bishkek. Her plans include contributing to the Turkmen society and starting a brand communication consultancy in Turkmenistan.

Humira, Suhailla, Nargiza and Lidia are just a few examples of AUCA women that are anxious to make it to the top and become leaders in their communities and across the globe.

by Humira Noorestani

Dear Ellen Hurwitz,

On behalf of all President Scholarship winners of 2010 I would like to thank President Ellen Hurwitz for this generous award. I really appreciate her recognition of students' achievements and, as well, her contribution to the development of our university.

Throughout the time I've known Dr. Hurwitz, she has always been very supportive of students' intellectual life and development. Her devotion to AUCA, ambitions to advance this university to a new level are really worth of admiration.

I truly believe that AUCA has significantly advanced since the start of Dr. Hurwitz's work as the President of the University. This fact is, undoubtedly, the result of her loyal dedication to AUCA and inspiring persistence in decision-making.

I would like to wish Dr. Hurwitz further success in her life and good health, and hope that she did achieve the goals she has set for herself in these years.

I also hope that AUCA will live up to the expectations, which are set before this university. Without Dr. Hurwitz's help, this would not have been ever possible.

Thank you once again for your contribution and for believing in AUCA.

Sincerely,

Elena Tsoy '10

Dear Ellen Hurwitz,

It is impossible to underestimate the role and value of high-quality education in the era of technology and information in which we live. AUCA is one of the few universities in CIS countries where academic honesty, high standards of education, and critical thinking are the main priorities. At AUCA I get an essential chance to acquire broad knowledge in my field of study as well as develop my leadership and analytical skills and become a well-rounded person.

As a recipient of AUCA Presidential scholarship for high academic performance I feel gratitude towards the university that it holds an interest in supporting students and encouraging them for great achievements. Without the scholarship that I have been awarded it wouldn't be possible for me and my single-parent family to pay for the tuition.

AUCA for me is a big amicable family. Together we aspire for getting good education; we cherish friendship and mutual help. Highly skilled faculty provides us with essential knowledge on our future professions. I am very thankful for the opportunity to study in AUCA and be a part of its wonderful community.

Sincerely,

Emil Akhmirov '10



Student Philanthropy: Future We Believe In

"The world we live in seems to be increasingly overwhelmed with the idea of self-profit. The reality is that life is getting more and more complex and imposes many new hardships on people. However, being an optimist I tend to search for and find positive aspects of life. One of my latest discoveries is Rotaract," in such an intriguing manner starts the conversation Alisa Jumadilova, a student of International and Comparative Politics and the President of AUCA Rotaract team.

Rotaract is global organization of hundreds of thousands of innovative, community-minded young professional and student volunteers aged 18-30. They work as partners-in-service with their parent organization, Rotary International, and provide young men and women with opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills that will assist them in personal development, address the physical and social needs of the communities they live in, and promote better relations among all people worldwide through a framework of friendship and service.

"Give Children Vision of Care" is Rotaract's team main project this year and all funds raised through it are contributed to create audio books for blind children.

"We have held few fundraising events such as charity evenings at fashionable restaurants and selling pumpkins on Halloween and special holiday love sets on St. Valentine's Day," says Alisa. "The main goal of our project was to give the blind children an opportunity to hear and read, and we thank everyone who joined us at this charity evening. With tender care we wish to bring new palette of dreams and aspirations into these chil-

dren's lives, and with deep hope we believe that our efforts will help them to build new patterns of life."

Rotaract has been an official program of Rotary International since 1968, and is a very important part of Rotary family, since Rotaract clubs provide an excellent training ground for future community leaders.

"As one of the most active clubs among all Rotaract communities in the Central Asian region, our Rotaract has undertaken many successful projects in Kyrgyzstan," said Daler Baitursunov, one of the leaders on the AUCA Rotaract team. "But we still seek to expand our cooperation, and at the moment we are trying to attract Rotaract clubs from Baku and from Almaty to jointly pilot several international projects, which will bring the world attention to the community problems of both Central Asia and the Caucasus."

Recently the AUCA Rotaract team received a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan to implement the "Future We Believe In" project, which aims to provide orphanage graduates with the opportunity to take their full place within society.

According to Jibek Aiylichieva, a student of Business Administration and the Treasurer of AUCA Rotaract, "Rotaract is a place, where a person can get great experience by helping people who are in need, and this is something you flow into after you realize how important your help can be for the society."

By Kemel Toktomushev



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28 April 2010

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205 Abdymomunov Street, Administration Building,
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic 720040

Dear Dr. Hurwitz:

The Rotary Club of Bishkek will take this opportunity to offer you our sincere thanks for your contribution, over the past several years, to the activities of our Club. Your work, both at American University and Rotary Club, were of substantial benefit to the people of the Kyrgyz Republic, and we are happy to give this recognition.

May we also extend our best wishes for your future work upon your return to the United States.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenneth Arne".

Kenneth Arne, President



Greetings from Your Alma Mater!

Our Dearest Alumni,

Greetings from your Alma Mater!

In many cultures spring is viewed as the beginning of something new and wonderful. I truly hope that the same can be said about our association. The Alumni Association plays a vital role in the development of our university. It is you, our alumni that represent AUCA in everything that you do every day. If some universities are known for defining their students, we believe that it is our students and alumni that give the core definition and show the true colors of our university. Each graduate is unique and it is this distinctiveness that makes AUCA stand proud.

We at AUCA not only value our alumni but also like to stay connected. We love to hear about any news or exciting events that might take place in your lives.

Please remember that AUCA is continuously growing and this development is made possible by the generosity of our sponsors. Previously, alumni like you have made contributions, which have helped support scholarships for both local and international students, books for our library, exciting new courses and groundbreaking faculty research. If you would like to make a contribution please contact us any time.

It is with my greatest pleasure that I present to you a very special section of the *AUCA Magazine* devoted to you – Our Alumni. I truly hope that you will enjoy reading about your friends and former classmates.

The Alumni Association looks forward to hearing from you in the future. Stay connected and together we can make great things happen!

Sincerely yours,

Aigul K. Kasymova

Director of the Annual Fund and Alumni Relations

Alumni.AUCA@gmail.com

Every university cherishes and values their outstanding alumni. Individuals who once roamed the halls of the American University of Central Asia went on to become bright leaders of our country. Whether these graduates decided to continue their education, start a family or enter professional world, we at AUCA value them for their achievements and acknowledge their success. For this issue of the AUCA Magazine, we are featuring four of our outstanding alumni who achieved great heights and are contributing towards positive changes.



Kubat Alymkulov (left) and his friend

*“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.”
Abraham Lincoln*

Red Devil’s Fan: Kubat Alymkulov

Kubat is the Managing Director for Central Asia in Aiten Consulting Group and has worked in the past for such big names as Deloitte and Touché, where he received a double promotion that propelled him professionally and KPMG where he began his career path after graduating from AUCA.

On the personal side five terms that Kubat Alymkulov can be described with would be—determined, honest, noble, driven and a huge Manchester United fan. Wearing a crisp white shirt and tailored suit, Kubat is a down to earth young man with a strong character, who likes skiing, staying up late cheering his favorite football club and the film *Bumer*. He enjoys music and literature and named Chingiz Aitmatov among his favorite authors.

The foundations of his professional success were laid at AUCA. When entering the university, Kubat’s interest in finance determined his choice of department he wanted to study and led him to the pro-

fessional heights he is at today. Kubat always took his studies seriously and had great appreciation for his professors, two of which played an important role in inspiring and encouraging him on his way to success. Olga Galimova helped Kubat to pass his CAP (Certified Accounting Practitioner) and to receive his ACCA (The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants). Today Kubat speaks fondly of her professionalism and individual approach to each student. The second professor that influenced Kubat is Irina Nizovskaya who taught critical thinking and taught her students to appreciate and understand the importance of it.

Kubat was ecstatic during his graduation ceremony. It is hardly surprising given that he graduated with honors. It also made him feel somewhat sad as the realization of yet another chapter of his life being turned has dawned on him. But Kubat felt that this was also the beginning of something new and extremely exciting.

When asked what motivates him in life, Kubat pauses for a minute and then answers in a clear voice – “Self-realization!” He went on to add that the desire to prove himself of being capable of achieving his goals plays an important role. Double promotion, diploma with honors, excellent final school grades... But his determination and commitment is not exclusively professional. Kubat has a black belt in Karate and won championships in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

“I would like to thank two individuals who have not only influenced me but have made me who I am today. I would like to thank my mother who has always been there for me in both good and bad times. It is because of her love and undivided attention I am who I am today. Also, I would like to thank my Karate instructor who has taught me the essence of discipline and hard work. I can honestly say that without the help of these two people I would have been a very different person.”

Honorary Alumni Ambassador: Ekaterina Erichsen (nee Pak)

“If you want to achieve things in life, you’ve just got to do them, and if you’re talented and smart, you’ll succeed.”

Juliana Hatfield



She currently works for the Meridian Securities UK in London. Some people are born to be leaders and role models. She has achieved great many things in her life and will continue to be viewed by her former classmates and colleagues as somewhat of a role model. Without further do, let me present our former student, a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a professional, a leader and breathtaking beauty Ekaterina Erichsen.

Ekaterina graduated from AUCA Business Administration Program in 2001. Later, she received her MBA in International Management with a focus on Global Management from the Garvin School of International Management. Ekaterina has already worked in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Germany and the UK. Before Meridian Securities she worked for the likes of SigmaBleyzer Private Equity Group and Deutsche Post World Net In-House Consulting. Alongside her successful academic and professional careers, Ekaterina is happily married with a son.

When reflecting on her time back at AUCA Ekaterina has only the fondest memories. "AUCA has been and always will be very special for me. First of all, it was a launch pad for me as a professional. Not only it allowed me to acquire a solid foundation of knowledge and skills required to be competitive on the world market, but most importantly my experience at AUCA expanded my horizons, showed me new heights to strive for and set my mindset to the 'nothing is impossible' mode. And I think that the latter is what differentiates AUCA from all other schools in the region. The four years spent at AUCA were a very exciting, eventful time and are forever engraved in my memory. I am sure that the friendships and

strong bonds we formed back then will last a lifetime!"

Ekaterina cherishes her memories at AUCA and the strong personal bond with the university, which she was able to form while being a student. This very day she continues to stay in touch with her former classmates and AUCA friends. "On personal level, I am in touch with a lot of friends, alumni of the school. AUCA created lifelong friendships, which remain strong no matter what part of the world you are in! To this day, it continues to surprise me to see what amazing things AUCA alumni have achieved and continue to achieve and I feel so privileged to be part of this group!"

Ekaterina is the quintessential alumni ambassador. "I am very proud of my degree from AUCA and will always recommend this school to prospective students. I am very accessible to current students who want advice and will always do what I can to assist. I feel it is my duty to pave the way for students as other alumni have done for me. It is one of the many ways to increase exposure to AUCA and increase the popularity of the school. Even today, I feel as though I am an ambassador to the school as I work my way up the corporate ladder."

"I would like to wish the alumni community to keep working hard and accomplishing your dreams. The education earned from AUCA will open many doors and for the doors that will not open so readily, perseverance and tenacity will help you achieve your goals. We, the AUCA alumni, need to continue to strengthen our network, work together and above all welcome future AUCA alumni to our group," said Ekaterina and made us feel so proud to have her among our outstanding alumni.



*"Intelligence without ambition is a bird without wings."
Salvador Dali*

Diligent Patriot: Kumar Bekbolotov

We seldom come across individuals who genuinely make us wonder how much a human being is capable of doing. Professional resume of our next featured alumnus makes one wonder if he ever had a moment of free time. This is the story of Kumar Bekbolotov - an intelligent and ambitious man who achieved great professional success and continues to grow and learn as an individual.

In his young age Kumar a published author and has already held two senior professional posts- he is currently the Executive Director of the Soros Foundation - Kyrgyzstan, and previously held the position of Country Director of Institute

for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR).

Kumar graduated from AUCA in 2003 with a BA in International and Comparative Politics. The same year he went on to pursue his Master's degree in Political Science from the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary. Upon his return, Kumar began working at IWPR as a Program Coordinator. Only a year later he was appointed the Country Director of the IWPR in Kyrgyzstan. This promotion was due to his commitment and hard work that he demonstrated. His next promotion brought him to the Central Asia Program Director at IWPR in 2007. Kumar was in charge of the strategic leadership of IWPR programs in the Central Asian region.

As an addition to his very impressive professional career, Kumar serves as an Advisory Board member for the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia based in Bishkek. In 2007 he also worked as a part-time instructor of Kyrgyz Politics course at AUCA. Kumar is also an expert for the Institute for Public Policy and holds an international elections observer status.

Beautiful Mind: Isa Imanbaev

Isa is a graduate student at the Law School of Cornell University in the United States. Before Cornell, Isa received his LL.M in Corporate Law from Erasmus University in Rotterdam having graduated in top 6. He is a member of the LL.M Association Executive Board at Cornell and has been serving as an arbitrator at the International Court of Arbitrators in Kyrgyzstan. Having already done so much Isa has graduated from AUCA's International and Business Law Department only in 2006.

While at AUCA, Isa focused on Civic Law. When asked about AUCA, he stresses how important was the high quality of education that he received there. "AUCA provided me with a high-level legal education that has allowed me to practice law in one of the most prominent law firms in Kyrgyzstan," says Isa.

After his graduation, Isa clearly knew that he would go on to obtain his masters degree abroad. "I have decided to continue my education, because I realized the need for an international education in order to be able to help my country. I believe that individuals should always welcome further education and be able to build upon the foundations that they have already built" explains Isa his motivation to continue education abroad.

After AUCA, Isa went on to receive his Master of Law (Legum Magister) from Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Once he completed his master's, Isa returned home where he worked at the Grata Law Firm as a Senior Lawyer for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Offices and also lectured on Private International Law at AUCA. "I have had the chance to study in several fine foreign academic institutions. Not arguing against the criticism towards

the education system back home in the Kyrgyz Republic, I still would like to highlight the deep academic knowledge that AUCA provided me with. I am strongly convinced that the personal motivation of a student and drive is one of the main elements of successful education."

On the personal side Isa is very modest. "It is rather difficult to describe yourself. One might feel a personal connection or relate to a much wider range of characteristics than he or she objectively does. An issue of impartiality complicates such self-evaluations even more and I am of the opinion that the most accurate description should be made by those close to you, namely your family, friends and colleagues. I recall being referred to as modest. I believe that modesty in tolerance to the wrong of the world should be welcomed. In addition, I regard integrity and dedication as important qualities. Constantly striving for improvement and development should be an integral part of everyone's lives, no matter who they are".

Having been to many fascinating places around the world, Isa finds the natural beauty of Kyrgyzstan to be the most mesmerizing of all. To him the natural wonders of his home country are linked to his emotions and a deep feeling of personal connection. "I consider myself a lucky person as I have had the chance to visit many captivating and beautiful places such as Montmartre, Hamlet's Castle, and Niagara Falls. However, nothing can compare to the scenes and natural beauty of Kyrgyzstan. One of the most beautiful scenes would be observing at sunset the surface of the Issyk-Kul Lake from the massive old stone on top of the mountain in the village,



"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."

Aristotle

where I spent almost every summer of my childhood. It is more than just the scene that you see, it is about the associations, emotions that accompany it; another beautiful place for me is a bench by the children's sandpit in my courtyard".

In addition to his academic and professional careers, Isa underlines the vital importance of family and friends. In his own words his every achievement would not have been possible without the support of his family and friends. "I try my best to be a good son, grandson, brother, relative and friend. I feel privileged to be able to observe and try to absorb the wisdom and experience of the elder generations that I am blessed to have in my life. I am thankful to my family for the opportunities they endow to me every day."

“No Matter the Distance, We Are Still AUCA!”

The graduation ceremony marks the end of our student life and the beginning of something new and big. Some of us decide to pursue education further, at a postgraduate level, others begin building families, and some become part of the workforce. But regardless of the decision we make, we are confident that our loved ones will be there to support us. For many of us “loved ones” include our former AUCA classmates who became our friends. Thus, it comes only natural that many of us use every opportunity to get together whenever and wherever we can. This year we had three reunions each in a different part of the world – North America, Europe and Asia.

President Ellen Hurwitz organized a reunion at a Greek Zorba café in Washington, D.C. in November of 2009. This small and informal reunion gathered AUCA alumni who live in or are visiting the US and was also attended by John O’Keefe, former US Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. This reunion was an opportunity for AUCA graduates to get together and talk about their work, research and plans for future.

The second reunion took place in Budapest in December of 2009. The meeting was initiated by President Hurwitz and Vice-President Bermet Tursunkulova and was attended by the AUCA alumni currently

studying at the Central European University. In a friendly atmosphere the alumni discussed how AUCA educational experience enriched them and prepared them for graduate school, and ways to contribute to future development of AUCA. Recent graduates remembered their time at AUCA and referred to themselves as being a part of the AUCA family.

Last, but not least was the Almaty reunion. Similar to reunions in Washington and Budapest the Almaty gathering was informal. AUCA graduates met to catch up on the latest news and discussed recent developments, which took place at AUCA. Aleksandr Kuznetsov was appointed as the Chair of the Alumni Charter in Almaty.

Regardless of where AUCA graduates are in the world, they manage to stay connected. Without a doubt we carried into our adulthood this special bond formed while we were students. Many of us consider AUCA our second home and our friends and former classmates being almost our siblings. Friendships and memories that we have carried out of the AUCA walls linger in our hearts for many years. We enjoy and cherish a great deal every opportunity that we get to meet and remember AUCA.

By Aigul Kasymova



*American
University
of Central Asia*

Dear President Ellen Hurwitz,

The Alumni Association and the AA Board would like to use this opportunity to say Thank You for your outstanding work which you have performed while at AUCA.

There are many accomplishments which President Hurwitz has achieved while working at the American University of Central Asia. During her time as the AUCA President, the university has received accreditation; new course developments took place, and continued improvements within AUCA have taken place.

The alumni would like to show its great appreciation for the wonderful work which President Hurwitz has done. During her presidency, AUCA has flourished and has grown in so many ways. With her great passion for academic excellence and deep loyalty to the student body, President Hurwitz has achieved tremendous success and has helped develop AUCA into a true liberal arts college.

It is with the greatest pleasure that the Alumni Board on behalf of all the alumni of the AUCA would like to say Thank You to President Hurwitz. We wish you more success in the future!

Sincerely yours,

AUCA Alumni Association Board: 2010-2011

Abduramil Bukbaev

Ainura Ashirova

Aliaskar Kiiizbaev

Alina Murzaeva

Emir Kulov

Erjan Djumabaev

Kubat Alymkulov

Mirbek Karybaev

Ramis Djalibaev

Samat Kuljabaev

Tagai Tazabekov

Aigul K. Kasymova, Director of the Annual Fund and Alumni Relations

Migration Through Photography

To examine why people migrate and how they cope with the difficulties they encounter, the Social Research Center (SRC) of the American University of Central Asia last fall launched new student photography project entitled *Migration: Those Left Behind*.

"This photo project helped students to explore the influence of migration, both positive and negative, while meeting and interviewing migrants or their family members," said Aida Alymbaeva, Director of Social Research Center. "The students also experienced new emotions while visiting their families, and were very proud when their photos were exhibited at the national conference and at the university."

Migration is one of the SRC's thematic areas of research, policy analysis and seminars. Along with the photography project, which is a new initiative, the SRC runs a documentary film series on migration, disseminates Weekly News Digests on Central Asian Migration among scholars and organizes public lectures on the topic, regularly involving stu-

dents in its activities.

Migration: Those Left Behind presents the photographic works of nine students the SRC selected from the International and Comparative Politics, Sociology, European Studies, Anthropology and Journalism and Mass Communications programs through an open competition among AUCA students.

The project aimed to demonstrate concerns of migrants and their family members in Kyrgyzstan and to show how they cope with realities of con-



temporary life. The SRC invited a well-known Kyrgyz photographer Alexander Fedorov to deliver a master-class for students and oversee their work throughout this project.

At an orientation workshop Dr. Emil Nasritdinov, the SRC's thematic leader on migration and an associate professor of AUCA's Cultural Anthropology Program, shared his insights on the dimension and dynamics of internal and external migration. Dr. Nasritdinov also highlighted the hardships that people undergo when they migrate from provinces to the capital city or abroad.

In the course of the project, students visited various destinations to capture the life of migrants and their family members. Students visited schools that children of migrants attend and railway and bus stations from which Kyrgyzstan migrants leave for Russia and Kazakhstan. AUCA students also traveled to several villages in Kyrgyzstan's Chui Province to interview families whose members have gone to other countries as labor migrants.

After a month of intense work students exhibited their photos at a National Conference "Kyrgyz Labor Migrants' Behavior in the Context of Global Financial Crisis" organized by the OSCE Center in Bishkek in late November, 2009. Later, the photos were on display at AUCA.

The SRC is grateful to the OSCE Center for initiating and funding this project.



"This photo project helped students to explore the influence of migration, both positive and negative, while meeting and interviewing migrants or their family members."





*American
University
of Central Asia*

The Board of the American University-Central Asia Foundation salutes President Ellen Hurwitz on the occasion of her retirement. Her leadership and her commitment to the students of AUCA during the past five years have been outstanding. She has succeeded in advancing the mission of the campus and in enhancing its reputation as the finest institution of higher education in Central Asia. We have been privileged to work with her on behalf of AUCA and its students.

Thank you, President Hurwitz, our congratulations to you, and our best wishes for your future.

Gerald Duff, President
Emita Hill, Executive Director
Martha Merrill, Secretary
Temirlan Moldogaziev
Helen Fox Smith



*American
University
of Central Asia*

Ellen Hurwitz, a leader of great vision, wisdom and energy who has helped students, faculty, trustees, staff and the community of scholars in Central Asia create a forum where curious minds can come together and learn from one another while appreciating the special heritage that is unique in this historic crossroads of the world. May her words and deeds inspire future generations.

Dede Thompson Bartlett,
Trustee, American University of Central Asia

Ellen Hurwitz

Ellen is one of those people who has given herself a mission in life. Ellen Hurwitz has devoted her life to the formation of young leaders. After five years in Kyrgyzstan, at the helm of the American University of Central Asia, she is leaving the country with an extremely good record of "mission accomplished".

I met Ellen days after her arrival in Kyrgyzstan, later we became neighbors and our relations became more intensive. She is a Rotarian like me, and we have enjoyed our Rotarian gatherings. We have several things in common: Not only our Rotarian fellowship and principles, but also our strong belief in the rule of law and our common desire to see young leaders from the region emerge and design a new path of democracy that will lead all countries of Central Asia on the path to stable and continuous development.

President Ellen Hurwitz comes from a family where principles count. I met her father when he visited Kyrgyzstan, an extraordinary man with whom, as the founder and publisher of The Times of Central Asia, I had many things in common since he also was a publisher. He passed away not long ago and we were all sad. I also met her daughter and the son, all very nice people. But Ellen is outstanding on her own and I can only wish her all the best.

In the last few weeks, following the recent tragic events in Kyrgyzstan, we had some intensive correspondence. She was stuck in Kazakhstan and she worried not about herself in coming back to Kyrgyzstan, but above all, about the University and "her children". I kept reassuring her that everything was fine, that all would be over in a short time, but in her words I could sense the concern for what was happening. She gave a lot to the American University of Central Asia, and I'm sure the smiles and success of "her children" compensated her greatly.

Farewell Ellen, keep in touch.

Giorgio Fiacconi
Italian Honorary consul in Kyrg
Founder and Publisher
The Times of Central Asia





*American
University
of Central Asia*

Dear Ellen,

My good friend, former fellow student and distinguished President, how do I select nouns and adjectives adequate to qualify you and your service to the institution we both love?

Fearless, even fierce as needed, but also funny, with a much needed sense of the ridiculous. Inventive, imaginative, but also intense, when that's appropriate. Energetic and enthusiastic, a cheerleader for your team. Teacher, mentor, counselor and champion on behalf of the students, the faculty and staff, and even the board of trustees who rely always on you for guidance. You have set our compass in all winds and seas to the true north of an institution of higher learning, excellence and ever greater excellence. Spasiba.

Emita Hill,

Trustee, American University of Central Asia

Dear Ellen,

I would thank President Hurwitz for demonstration of a true leadership at AUCA. I believe she maintained an excellent balance of long-term vision and daily management to ensure the mission of AUCA is upheld. She has been emphatic about aligning all aspects of the university life to the liberal arts mission, which would be much appreciated by her successors in the future. I hope her attachment to AUCA remains as deep as it is now, and AUCA continues making her proud.

Shairbek Juraev,

Dean for Academic Development, AUCA

Please accept my sincere thanks for your invaluable contribution to the development of our university. You have joined AUCA after traumatic experience that split the university into several camps and could potentially ruin it. Your patience and considered decisions enabled not only to overcome the strife within the university but also to introduce vital systemic transformations. You were able to amplify AUCA's high regard among leading universities in Central Asian region during a period of tight budgets and continuing political unrest in the country. Once again, thank you for your great work and wish you all the best in your upcoming endeavors!

Mehrigiul Ablezova,

Assistant Professor, Sociology, AUCA



*American
University
of Central Asia*

Dear Ellen,

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name.

Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love

And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Romeo, what's here? Poison?

Drunk all, and left no friendly drop to help me after.

The immortal lines of Shakespeare's lovers resonated in the walls of the historical AUCA conference hall, which heard the statements of the Soviet and post-Soviet leaders of Kyrgyzstan, US dignitaries, AUCA presidents, the stories and performances of wonderful musicians, artists and scholars, and the polyphony of voices of the faculty, staff and students.

The idea to turn to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet as the central piece for the freshmen orientation week belonged to AUCA president Ellen Hurwitz. In spite of her busy schedule as chief administrator, she found time to think about which major work would reflect the transition of the AUCA to a new phase of its development—the partnership with the Bard College and demonstrate the AUCA focus on liberal arts.

This commitment to liberal arts agenda, I think, has been one of the president's priorities, and on many occasions she shared her ideas with the AUCA community and encouraged the faculty and staff to participate in the projects she initiated to advance this agenda.

Central Asian Humanities project is one of those initiatives that Dr. Hurwitz has launched and directed. The project allows us at attempt at approaching the history of Central Asia, its literature and arts relying on diverse materials and the spirit of critical enquiry and student centeredness. Her guidance and inspiration, her trust, the belief in academic freedom and the sense of humor have helped the participants in the project move forward.

I wish Ellen all the best in her new phase of life and I hope that there will be opportunities for her to keep helping the AUCA in accomplishing its mission.

*Valery Hardin, Assistant Professor, English Language
Department of AUCA*



American
University
of Central Asia

Dear Ellen,

While, there are so many occasions to show gratitude to you, and yet, there are hundreds of times when I did not express it. I'm glad I have this opportunity to profess my sincerest thanks to you. So, I wanted to take the time to personally acknowledge your eclectic yet unique approach of leadership of the university (it' a bit cliché and corny but true!). It must have been very tough during your first years (and perhaps even until now) but I guess your vision for the university has somehow been realized. I thank you for those stimulating, intellectual, yet light conversations (in and out of the university). They always inspire, challenge, and encourage me to think and explore more. I will surely miss it. I thank you for your passion, guidance, and enthusiasm to raise the level of intellectual and professional growth of the university. I thank you for instilling confidence, hardwork, and excellence. For your wisdom, professionalism, and straightforwardness, from you, I have learned much of life at work's philosophy. Finally, I thank you for trusting my abilities and bringing out the best in me. I'm grateful for now, but I thank you forever.

*Mary Bernadette Conde, Chair and Acting Associate Professor,
American Studies, AUCA*

I would like to express my profound respect and gratitude for President Ellen who have breathed new life into the university. She has re-centered an academic life of the university to the liberal arts approach to learning. She has inspired very important academic projects to emphasize the uniqueness of our mission in the region. From the very beginning of her Presidency Ellen has been a great source of challenge and insight. Her ideas on freedom and responsibility have prompted a lively discussion of the role of liberal education in fostering civic consciousness and appreciating to responsible freedom. She made this experience unforgettable source of wisdom, patience, elegance, and beauty. Dear Ellen, thank you for giving me a chance to learn a lot from you. I was honoured to work with you.

*Makhinur Mamatova Acting Associate Professor,
Psychology, AUCA*

AUCA Law Students Win Supreme Court Case

Yulia Amanbaeva and Sofia Abaihanova both seniors in the International and Business Law Department won a case before the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic. The case was heard by three Justices of the Supreme Court.

"We were protecting the interests of public association representatives who turned to us after losing the case in the Issyk-Kul Court of Appeal," Amanbaeva said. "The case was difficult in many respects because there were financial fraud and forgery involved."

Also, Amanbaeva and Abaihanova were acting on behalf of three plaintiffs, "which significantly complicated the entire procedure of defending our beneficiaries' interests," Abaihanova said.

"We had to challenge the decision of the Issyk-Kul Oblast Court and to fill

supervisory complaint to the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic."

Nonetheless, Amanbaeva and Abaihanova successfully defended the interests of AUCA Legal Clinic clients.

The AUCA Legal Clinic has served Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia by providing free legal assistance to vulnerable parts of society since 1999. At the same time it has given the AUCA law students an invaluable opportunity to practice their skills.

Elida Nogoibaeva, Chair of International and Business Law Department, expressed support for the Legal Clinic, which corresponds to the mission of the department, "We educate new generations of lawyers through a program with a focus on independent, analytical learning and practical skills within a liberal arts framework so that they play a role in transformation of soci-



ety to rule of law and market economy in Central Asia."

According to Sagyn Omuraliev, adviser of the Legal Clinic and a senior lecturer at AUCA, "To this day our young professionals have gained extensive experience in the civil sphere, and over the years of the clinic's work students have won numerous court cases. Of course, sometimes Legal Clinic faces very complicated cases, which may be difficult not only for students, but also for experienced instructors. However, I see that the students have a desire and motivation to become the true lawyers and to defend the rights and interests of those in need."



By Kemel Toktomushev

What does it cost to plant the seed of academic discovery?



We never know how far a student's interest will take him or her, so AUCA provides a rigorous liberal arts foundation that enables each student to become a lifelong learner. In fact, our alumni

have consistently proven the worth of an AUCA education by expanding the frontiers of knowledge and serving as leaders in their communities and the region.

How can you help educate the next generation of leaders?

Contributions from alumni, friends, and parents both maintaining the quality of our academic programs and they demonstrate the unwavering commitment of the AUCA Family to our Mission. Your gifts, large and small, will ensure that current students will enjoy the attentions of dedicated faculty and staff and that future challenges of the University will be met.

You may make a tax deductible gift by Credit Card or Check
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c/o Dr. Emita Hill
47 Wildcliff Road
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E-mail: develop@mail.auca.kg



Stay Connected Alumni Association

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