

# AUCA Magazine



*American University  
of Central Asia*

*Winter 2009*

**Academic Excellence**



**Dreams Do Come True –**  
**An Interview with Aijan Chynybaeva '99**  
Pictured with Professor Aron Brudnyi



# Faculty Excellence



Aida Abdykanova



Sergey Sklyar



Lyudmila Sergeenkova



Lidia Kashitsina



Tatyana Mamasheva  
with President Ellen S. Hurwitz



James Wissel



Cholpon Chotaeva



Emil Ilebaev



Nurilya Sharshekeeva





## Contents

---

02 President's Column

---

03 Columbia University  
Psychology Internship

---

05 George Washington Portrait  
Comes to AUCA

---

06 Feature Article:  
Dreams Do Come True

---

10 Faculty in Nebraska: Exploring  
Teaching Through a Student's Eyes

---

12 Faculty Profile: Alan Kubatiev

---

14 Improving English Skills

---

16 Environmental Research

---

18 Gallery: Initiation Ceremony  
and Diversity Week 2008

---

22 Students in Action

---

25 Prep Program

---

26 MBA Profile

---

28 An Encounter with Germany

---

30 Travel Notes

---



## AUCA's Quest for Excellence



The search for excellence at any university is an elusive and ongoing affair. At a University such as AUCA the search is joyous! The sheer talent and tenacity of our faculty and students makes the quest to develop ever better programs a road well taken. The articles in the current AUCA Magazine testify to the commitment of our talented learning community to both doing well and doing good things. They show that we are meeting our mission to develop enlightened and passionate learners and leaders for the region and beyond.

Our University has been embarking on a number of educational innovations worthy of comment in this column. I focus on a few here. Our readers should know that we are transforming our language of instruction, slowly but surely, from Russian into English. This is no

mean feat! It is a huge challenge to teach in a language other than one's own. But our faculty members are rising to the challenge, knowing that our students need to be fluent in reading, writing and thinking in English and that they themselves need to exemplify that quest for excellence that is so central to our mission. Our goal is to have 80% of our courses taught in English by the fall of 2010. We are already at about 75% and expect to reach our goal on schedule. This marks a quantum cultural shift in our University.

In parallel with the quest to make English our instructional *lingua franca* is the quest to deepen our students' understanding of the liberal arts. We particularly wish to foster the appreciation of free expression based on reliable information that is never plagiarized and that is critically analyzed. The transformation of this analysis into the well-articulated written word is part of the learning process. Our University seeks to raise the standards of student writing at all level and is exploring an interdisciplinary introduction to the liberal arts for first-year students, as well as expanded opportunities for senior thesis writing.

Our University is about to receive a high-tech media laboratory and a virtual learning classroom due to several recent grants that have come to us through the United States government. These state-of-the-art facilities are going to provide our students with access to electronic and media learning world wide. Our students will gain a new literacy that in some ways is becoming as much the *lingua franca* as English itself. We expect to pilot team taught courses with students and faculty from the American University of Afghanistan as early as the spring of 2009.

Complementing our search for excellence in English language instruction, writing and e-learning, both within and beyond the classroom, is the ongoing design of interdisciplinary learning experiments that center on the Central Asian historical, literary, artistic and philosophical experience. AUCA is dedicated to situating student learning in the region where it is taking place, in order to provide a liberal arts perspective on the region's deep, rich culture.

The AUCA search for excellence includes an enhanced emphasis on undergraduate research and the faculty development that enables it. Already more than fifty students write senior theses across most major programs. Some of these theses are published in peer reviewed journals and others are the basis for successful entry into leading graduate schools in the United States, Europe and Russia. In future editions of the AUCA Magazine we plan to highlight some of the students involved in senior research projects and the results of their research.

*Ellen S. Hurwitz, Ph.D. and President*

## AUCA MAGAZINE

American University of Central Asia, formed in 1997, is dedicated to improving the quality of the 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.

### Editor-in-Chief:

Alina Sottaeva

### Copy editors:

Janet Hohnen and Barent Gordinier

### Editorial Board:

Alina Sottaeva,  
Elizabeth Zalkind,  
Aliona Kim

### Contributors:

Alina Sottaeva,  
Elizabeth Zalkind,  
Helen Smith, Charter Morris,  
Nargiza Ryskulova,  
Ainura Eshenalieva,  
Serik Beimenbetov,  
Martin Ossewarde,  
Tatiana Kravchenko,  
Emil Lyu

### Pictures:

Maxim Shubovich,  
Tatiana Kravchenko,  
Lazarina Kuchmenova,  
Emil Akhmatbekov

### Photo Editor:

Emil Akhmatbekov

### Design and Layout:

Al Salam Printing House

---

AUCA Magazine is published twice per academic year by the American University of Central Asia

---

You may send your correspondence to:

AUCA Magazine  
American University of Central Asia  
205 Abdymomunov St.  
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic 720040  
Tel./Fax: (996 312) 66 11 20  
E-mail: aucamagazine@mail.auca.kg  
www.auca.kg

On the cover: Aijan Chynybaeva and Professor Aron Brudnyi



## Columbia University Psychology Internship

After spending five weeks as interns at Columbia University over the summer, AUCA psychology students Elena Tsoy'10 and Alena Guseva'10 returned to Bishkek determined to pursue careers in psychological counseling and organizational psychology, and they are motivated to conduct professional-level research in Kyrgyzstan.

Elena and Alena spent their summer time as interns at Columbia University's Social Relations Lab in the USA. During their intensive internships, they played active roles in several psychological research projects in such areas as social psychology and neuropsychology.

The internship was organized by Columbia University's Psychology Department. The head of the department, Geraldine Downey, invited AUCA to send two psychology students to assist Columbia's scholars in their research. The Psychology Department chose Elena and Alena for their academic excellence.

Once at Columbia, inspired to learn about contemporary psychological research, Elena and Alena dove right into processing statistical data and transcribing interviews and questionnaires so they could be analyzed.

"We learned a few major rules of doing a good research," remarked Elena. "First, every research project shall add value to psychology and human kind. That's how we learned that research shall not be conducted for the sake of research or for the sake of a researcher's interests."

Her peer, Alena, said that they also learned how complex it is to become a good scholar. "You have to develop a research theme, which is not just a subject you are interested in – it's a topic that might bring psychology to another level."

Shifting their minds to learn how to think pragmatically and globally, AUCA's young scholars came to understand that it is really difficult to develop an idea, and that it is even harder to verify that an idea has value to the science of psychology, since so much has been researched already.

"We learned a lot about psychology and research at AUCA, and we are so thankful to our professors!" said Elena. "Our host professors [at Columbia] were very impressed with the breadth of knowledge we have. We knew, or at least had an understanding of, every aspect of psychology they asked us about."

Alena emphasized the point: "We had a very solid grounding in theoretical knowledge and were offered an



opportunity to apply our theory knowledge to practice."

Geraldine Downey, Vice Provost for Diversity Initiatives and Professor of Psychology, remarked "It was an absolute pleasure to have Alena Guseva and Elena Tsoy intern in our lab this past summer. They are pleasant, enthusiastic, and bright students. I was especially impressed by their ability to grasp material and their willingness to get involved in all aspects of the research projects being conducted in our lab. They showed initiative and a level of maturity that will go a long way in furthering their, already promising, academic careers".

"As interns, they were very effective. What they lacked in understanding (due to a slight language barrier) was more than compensated for by their tenacity and academic prowess. I have no doubt that they will make significant contributions to the field of psychology—and academia as a whole—and wish them success in whatever they decide to pursue," continued Geraldine Downey.

The intensive, five-week internship was worthwhile for Elena and Alena. The girls said it helped them connect theory and practice, confront real-life situations and make the right career decisions.

"I always wanted to pursue my career in psychological counseling and was happy to take an active part in clinical research and work with people who have avoidant and borderline personality disorders," remarked Elena. "The research that I assisted with [at Columbia] made me sure that I had made a right choice."

Alena, who leans toward a specialization in organizational psychology, confirmed for herself that this part of psychology really is her cup of tea.

*Elizabeth Zalkind*



## Hersh Chadha Sponsors AUCA Scholarships



On October 16, sixty AUCA freshmen and sophomores received \$1,000 scholarships from the Memorial Prabhakar Hersh Chadha Scholarship Program.

The program was recently established by Dubai-based Hersh Chadha, a prominent entrepreneur and accomplished photographer, in the name of his late son. The students were chosen to receive the scholarships, which cover nearly half of their tuition bills, based on their academic achievements and financial backgrounds.

"I wanted to help Kyrgyz students who have the will, aptitude and need for a good education, but unfortunately lack funds for a university education," said Mr. Chadha. "I felt that by making this donation I have given the students a chance to get education and in the future, when they've grown up, they will be able to help other students. It's a sort of chain-reaction: you do it for one and then it goes on and on and on."

The scholarships were applied to the students' tuition bills at the beginning of the academic year. Then Mr. Chadha visited AUCA on Oct. 14 and personally presented students with commemorative certificates and engraved pens.

Bermet Zhumakadyr kyzy, a freshman in the International and Comparative Politics Department, said she found out by email in early October that she'd been awarded a Prabhakar Hersh Chadha Scholarship and quickly called her parents in the Issyk Kul region to tell them the good news.

"I was really excited and glad to get it and I really want to thank [Mr. Chadha] that he gave this scholarship," Zhumakadyr kyzy said.

While in Bishkek, Mr. Chadha also conducted a photography master class and a glamour photography workshop at AUCA. He has won international photography prizes and published several books of photographs.

"I really enjoyed his class," Zhumakadyr kyzy said.

## AUCA Journalism Students Learn Their Profession with IWPR

On October 10, AUCA Journalism students found themselves employed by a respected international news agency as part of the new work-and-study opportunity now being offered by the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). The three-year project is aimed at enhancing reporting on Central Asian affairs.

Within the project, IWPR will offer AUCA students professional journalism training and coaching as well as part-time employment. The project is part of an IWPR effort to introduce new concepts of reporting in the region and promote analyses of events that uncover tendencies and find long-term solutions to political and social challenges.

A group of professional journalists and editors will work closely with the AUCA journalism students to advance their news writing and interviewing skills. The young journalists learn how to select interesting subjects for reporting and develop them into articles, how to write a lead and work with quotes, and how to build an effective reporting structure and take a unique approach to each report.

"We'll invest lots of effort in educating our apprentices on how to provide analyses of current events to give the reader the 'news behind the news' and to help them understand events in a broader political and social context," stated Aaida Kasymalieva.

AUCA journalism students will search for themes with international impacts and will write articles that meet IWPR criteria. Articles approved by the organizations London-based chief editor will be published on IWPR's website whilst the authors are paid for their work.



"The involvement of students in a real journalism project helps them to understand the journalism profession from A to Z," said Marina Sivasheva, head of AUCA's Journalism and Mass Communications

Department. "Students will apply their skills and acquire considerable news writing experience. As a result, our students will graduate with a solid grounding in both theoretical knowledge and practical skills and will be very attractive to potential employers."

"I think this project will considerably enhance my journalism education. First, I will acquire practical skills that I can apply directly in writing articles. Second, it will help me enrich my worldview. And the most important thing is that after completing the project I will be able to develop themes that are relevant and interesting to the international audience," said Nargiza Ryskulova, a sophomore in the Journalism and Mass Communications Department.



# George Washington Portrait Comes to AUCA



BISHKEK, December 16 – We are very pleased to inform you that the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association has presented our University two full size replicas of Rembrandt Peale's famous "porthole" portrait of George Washington.

"George was an amazingly enlightened and entrepreneurial leader who had a passionate interest in education. During my visit to Mt. Vernon to Gay Hart Gaines, formerly Regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association offered to send us the portraits of George with the expectation that they would be hung in prominent places on our walls. We are delighted that the portraits have come, are hung, and each day remind our students of the great American values that we share with President Washington. It's great to have George looking over us as we fulfill our mission." – said Ellen S. Hurwitz, AUCA President.

We are ever grateful to Ms. Gay Hart Gaines, former chair of the Board of the Association, for envisioning the possibility of shipping the portraits to our University.





# Dreams Do Come True

*An Interview with Aijan Chynybaeva, BA '99*

**Alina Sottaeva:** Aijan, you entered AUCA when it was the Kyrgyz American Faculty under the Kyrgyz National University. You received your BA degree in 1995 and graduated four years later already in AUCA. So what has influenced your choice and why have you decided to become an AUCA student?

**Aijan Chynybaeva:** Actually I was planning to enter the International University of Kyrgyzstan because they had an International Relations faculty which was my priority and it happened that I missed the applications deadline and was destined to enter AUCA.

**AS: Have you ever had regrets about your choice?**

**AC:** Absolutely not, I have never regretted! I had a chance to travel to the US with a FLEX support and got so much inspiration from it. It was quite a challenge to make up my mind to apply for BA because of so many math I didn't really like at that time. But I was fine and managed to improve my math skills successfully. What I really liked about my university was the possibility to choose my program of study and combine other activities with my study.

**AS:** What were your other engagements beside academic life?

**AC:** I was a very active student and wanted to apply receiving theory in practice and mostly I combined studies and working for different projects. And I really enjoyed it! I took part in all extracurricular events conducted by AUCA.

**AS: Do you still remember your teachers and professors?**

**AC:** Yes, I remember them all, but especially Kamilla Sharshekeeva, the rector at that time, because of her ability to give us healthy ambitions; I have only bright memories about her. Just for instance, once she gave us pens with a sign "Training Future Leaders" and I felt like I really was the one to change the future of my country. Also Kenneth Arne, I appreciated this teacher a lot. He taught us business by vivid and practical examples and invited professionals for our classes. And many other who I remember with tender care.

**AS: What were your next steps after you received your BA diploma?**



Arslan and Aijan, Asel Vazirova '99 with husband Ulan



**AC:** I began to work for an insurance company and decided not to continue my study. I worked at the Sales and Marketing Department with Hyatt Regency Bishkek. For one year I was creating marketing strategy for them. It was interesting but soon I found it boring because of all the data and calculations of risk management. So I decided to continue the search of what was really mine. Being a student I visited Istanbul and there I realized I would love to work in a five-star hotel. I didn't know we would ever have Hyatt in Bishkek so it was only a dream. One year before graduation a manager from Hyatt gave a lecture at AUCA I attended. At that time there were only construction works going on, so I did not even pay attention to that and forgot about Hyatt. Well I was invited for an interview and was selected to work for Hyatt. I worked with his hotel for about a total of 5 years, including maternity leave. However, even being pregnant I continued to work for them (laughing).



**AS:** I know you often visit the AUCA campus. What is your reason? Do you often meet with other alumni?

**AC:** When I just graduated, I very often came by to see my teachers. I attended all the Initiation and Commencement and other ceremonies and events just to feel again the spirit. I keep on visiting AUCA. I visit my teachers and I visit alumni who keep on working in AUCA. It is very important for me. I regularly come to the Alumni Reunions and I have some close friends among AUCA alumni and we are always glad to see each other and support each other.

**AS:** Do you see any difference between your alumni generation and present alumni?

**AC:** AUCA alumni have something in common, namely the spirit of freedom and high aims, but what I don't like in some, not all, present alumni is that sometimes they without practical experience want immediate first salary of \$600 or more. My experience shows one needs to work hard first in order to achieve good results, one should first absorb practical knowledge and skills to improve his academic background. Hardworking can make a person multisided and indispensable.

**AS:** Aijan, you are married and have two children. How did you meet your husband?

**AC:** I met him in a café, he was with another girlfriend and I was with another boyfriend at that time. When introduced I liked him at once. We met again in a month at a conference. I was translating there and he was wondering how much my service cost. That is how our relationships have started. I was a four-year student and he studied at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University. He is working in banking business and he is 2

years older than me. We were dating for a year, then we got married and we were preparing to have children by undergoing medical treatment and reading much literature on the issue. It was quite a thorough preparation process. Now we have two sons of 3.5 and 6.5 years old. And we plan to have a baby girl in the future.

**AS:** Impressive results! Let's now talk about your business business. You own and run "Club Hotel." How long ago have you started this project? Was it the dream of your life and are you happy now when this dream got realized?

**AC:** Yes, I am happy. Dreams do come true if you have a very precise dream and you know exactly what you want and it is like a crystal clear picture in your head. And if everything is vague and obscure and nothing for sure then you will always say dreams never come true.

**AS:** How long ago have you started your own business and how did it all start for you?

**AC:** We started in February 2008. But before that it was a serious preparation stage. Frankly speaking, when I was working for Hyatt already then I was thinking about having my own hotel. There just were no opportunities that time. But I never let this dream fly away. I think it is sort of like American style: when you first have tasted everything from the inside from down to top and then created your own business, knowing all the ins and outs.

Of course, it wasn't really easy at all. I could perfectly understand that in order to create my own hotel I would



need serious investment. I was lucky. My husband's partners appeared to have an idea about opening a hotel and here I was. Surely I agreed to help and in January we started reconstruction of the floor and in May we finished it.

**AS: How do you manage to combine your roles of huge project director and wife and mother?**

**AC:** It is a popular opinion that any managerial position is nothing more but sitting in a chair and drinking coffee. In fact it is a very demanding and interesting job. I even haven't expected it to be so overwhelming and challenging in the beginning. First I was surprised when I saw hotel general directors inspecting the toilets and checking everything themselves. Now I do the same trying to make sure I have done everything possible to satisfy the clients.

I assure you my job is so interesting so if I could I would devote my time to it from 8.00 till 22.00 but at 17.00 I stop myself realizing it's time to go pick up my children from the kindergarten and that is why I try to plan all my meetings before that time.

**AS: Aijan, share a little bit about your social life. You are a member of Rotary Club of Bishkek. What is it for you and is it your only engagement?**

**AC:** Actually it was exactly after my trip to the US when I realized I have the feeling for charity in my heart. There

I had a project of helping women who have suffered from home violence. Though I was only 16 years old I was deeply concerned with the issue since some of my relatives here faced this problem. So I was interviewing women, visited them in their houses and saw it was really possible for them to receive help to overcome their life circumstances. Also it is interesting to note that one of the first fundraising campaigns in AUCA was held by me. It was on June 1, 1996, and we were making a concert for children. But then somehow the event turned out to become a real fundraising action for supporting the children from orphanages and since that time I've been always oriented to such activity.

The Rotary Club started for me in Hyatt when I first learned about this Club. My impression was that it was an elite closed club for gentlemen only. Every time my boss was going there everyone in the office turned to be serious and mysterious. And my own experience with Rotary was initiated by my husband. He was invited to join and later was asked to invite his active spouse to attend one of rotary meetings. With no doubt I agreed and some time later I became a Rotary member on the same day with AUCA President Hurwitz.

**AS: What are the most significant projects initiated by you?**

**AC:** Well, I am mostly involved in organizing fundraising events and Charity Balls. But I am also involved in the orphanage and art projects.



Aijan with beloved AUCA professor Aron Brudnyi





**AS: Can you name two or three achievements you can say you are proud of?**

**AC:** Well, first of all being a woman I consider a family to be one of the most significant achievements. With my husband we are together for 10 years and looking at some of my friends whose families are breaking apart I understand it is a great achievement to create and keep a healthy family. It is quite a work! Number one I would call my marriage, number two are my kids. Also to that number one I include the fact that my husband grows with me. I think it is important. And if I were a bad wife my husband wouldn't be able to improve and grow personally and professionally. It is interesting but I have always dreamt about exactly this kind of man. Wearing glasses, involved in finances and investments and actually I dreamed to marry a foreigner but it was like a joke from God that I have found a Kyrgyz man just as perfect as I thought only a foreigner could be. For my husband my personal growth is also a priority, it is important for him that I am improving, reaching my goals and feel happy. Unfortunately I cannot claim now my "Club Hotel" business to be a real achievement since the financial results will only be known in one year. Maybe in the next year I can say I have achieved what I wanted.

Oh, by the way, actually I forgot to mention I had one more business. When I was pregnant and left Hyatt with amazing luggage of knowledge and skills, I opened a men's clothes boutique. I'd been doing it for 2 years and then I realized it wasn't meant for me. But it is so different from hotel and tourism area. I like to eat, I like to travel and I know what it is like to stay in a hotel.

**AS: What are your future plans? What dreams or goals are yet to come?**

**AC:** I've always liked to sing. I sang at the University, once I won a vocal contest and due to my victory our university got the second place among other universities. I sang a Kyrgyz song about motherland and was wearing a national dress.

**AS: So you plan to record disks?**

**AC:** I've already got one with children's songs but it is very amateur, for family members only. I also like to draw. I actually like many things!

**AS: How do you spend you leisure time?**

**AC:** I like to read spiritual literature. It is important for me. Also, I have been playing tennis for a year and a half and also attended belly-dance classes. But I know I have got to be more disciplined and devote more time to physical activity.

**AS: So Aijan, having rather broad life and business experience, what secret can you share or what advice can you give?**

**AC:** You just need to learn to let it go and forgive. I think it is important not to revenge and find a way for your hurt emotions to calm down. It is a very important ability because many times in life you will face unfair tough situations and unfair behavior. And if to tempt and act back in a similar ugly way it will only mean you have lowered to that same level as the person hurting you. Also being a student I can remember well how stressed we were before exams or when a serious task must be done in limited time and receiving A is just a question of life and death. And you know, getting older I realize it is actually very important to be able to move away from this kind of stressful situations. When you have done everything that is in your physical and emotional strength it is very important to be able to just let it go and trust God with the outcome. It might seem funny but every time I felt that stress I just prayed to God and was surprised when I got an A. And vice versa. When I was 100% sure of my readiness I somehow got a C. So, be less and self-confident and go for your dreams!

*Alina Sottaeva*

## FACULTY IN NEBRASKA:

# EXPLORING TEACHING



**LA:** There were two significant reasons which outweighed other parts of my life at that time. First, the program was a wonderful opportunity to improve my own English language skills. And second, in my opinion, all professors should continue to study in order to maintain their teaching capability and to keep up with changes in their field. This program gave me a great chance to be a student again, and seeing American teaching methods from a student's perspective helped me to understand all the refinements of the American education system.

After years of a teaching career, Liubov Altynikova experienced once more what it's like being a university student. Only this time, instead of the Russian Academy of Science in Novosibirsk, she studied at the University of Nebraska, in Kearney, Nebraska, USA.

**Nargiza Ryskulova:** Liubov Aleksandrovna, how did you get the chance to study for one semester in the United States of America?

**Liubov Altynnikova:** In the fall of 2007, the AUCA Administration initiated a new project to increase professors' qualifications. The first contest was offered to the Natural Sciences & Informational Technology Department and the Sociology Department. Elmira Kerimkulova, a professor from our department, and I were among the candidates selected. We studied at the University of Nebraska, Kearney (UNK) for one semester.

**NR:** Why did you decide to participate in the program?

**NR:** How different and how similar are teaching methods in AUCA and in UNK?

**LA:** To my surprise, I found there are not many differences in teaching mathematics. It seems that in any language, teaching math remains the same. Also the general principles of teaching are more or less identical in the two universities; for example, the grading system, the critical skills approach and the stress on student-oriented teaching.

**NR:** What do you think are the advantages of UNK over AUCA?

**LA:** Well, the UNK student body is about six times bigger than AUCA, so this brings some obvious differences. Kearney is a real university town; the large campus, with its sports grounds, dormitories and other buildings, is an important feature of the town. AUCA is still growing and hopefully, we will have more facilities like that one day. Also UNK wins if we compare the availability of technological equipment. For example,



# THROUGH A STUDENT'S EYES

in AUCA we only have projectors in a few rooms, but at Kearney they're in every classroom. All this makes the professors' job much easier. On the other hand, my time in Nebraska made me realize how highly-qualified the AUCA professors are and how smart our students are!

**NR: So, are we ahead intellectually?**

**LA:** No, it's just that I was really proud that our students here generally have a much broader outlook than that of the American students I met, and their knowledge of mathematics is better. American students sometimes have difficulty doing quite simple division without a calculator. Our students do this on daily basis. Perhaps this is a problem of the high-tech age.

**NR: What courses did you take at UNK?**

**LA:** I earned 18 credits during the semester, six of which were for English courses. So my goal to improve my English was realized. And also, I had the opportunity to practice English every day with native speakers.

**NR: What are the most unforgettable memories you brought back from Nebraska?**

**LA:** I'll always remember our Thursday English classes. To make students speak English, the instructors used a very interesting method. Every Thursday we would go to the student café and chat with the people there. We earned points based on the number of people we interacted with. The conversations were so varied and spontaneous, and we were trying our best in order to get more points.

Another remarkable event was the Teacher's Con-

ference we attended in Salt Lake City. Hundreds of teachers of all levels participated – from elementary teachers right up to university professors. The teachers could take part in any seminars they wished, considering their own professional needs. The synthesis and discussion of methods used in teaching students of different ages made the experience unforgettable.

And then, perhaps most important, was the social experience; I made friends with some wonderful people. One of my friends from Nebraska visited Kyrgyzstan this summer and was astonished by the beauty of our country. Compared to the harsh Nebraska weather, Kyrgyzstan seems to be a heaven on Earth.

**NR: What are your future career plans?**

**LA:** After the wonderful experience at Kearney, I aim to keep improving my teaching methods. I also want to develop my courses further and teach them in English.

*Nargiza Ryskulova '11  
Journalism and Mass Communications*



## **Alan Kubatiev: Years devoted to AUCA**



**Elizabeth Zalkind:** *How long have you been working in the Journalism program at the University?*

*Can you describe your experience, your main achievements and disappointments, and the things you haven't completed?*

**Alan Kubatiev:** I've been working at the University since 1996. At one time I was offered a Chair at the Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University (KRSU) but Camilla Sharshkeeva insisted that I remain a part-time teacher here at AUCA. When the situation in KRSU became unfavorable I was welcomed back here, just as Homer's Odysseus was welcomed by Penelope. Frankly, I returned to AUCA because it was the most interesting education project of that time. The funny thing is that I had met Camilla by chance before I moved to Almaty. She told me she was planning to create something new and would like me to be involved. As we live in Asia, where it's impolite to say "No" or "Yes," I told her I would think about it and then disappeared.

I had a very interesting job in Almaty and if things had gone smoothly I would have stayed there.

But a conflict arose among the crush of companies and organizations that I was connected to, so I returned to Bishkek. I was once again welcomed back here. Aynura Sadirbekova, who was vice president then, asked me to join the University. I started teaching in the Department of Foreign Languages and when the Department of Journalism was established, I became its first Chair.

I dare say my greatest achievement has been in building up the Journalism group. It was my creation and I nurtured it continuously. I invited many new people to join. They started from the very beginning and have learned a great deal. They are now excellent teachers, leaders and managers, and will do even more for the University in the future. We love and honor them.

**E.Z.:** *What have I failed to achieve? What is not yet completed?*

**A.K.:** I think that AUCA is an intercultural educational institution. The University does possess some key advantages and assets, such as modern facilities, a well-equipped library, and access to international websites, encyclopedias and specialized information resources. I think these are all important achievements.

**E.Z.:** *Tell us about your own background.*

**A.K.:** I am half Ossetian and half Russian. I've written a book about the nations of the Northern Caucasus. In doing so, I had to be very careful because it is sometimes said that you can't put Armenians and Chechens on one shelf. I spent a long time gathering material for the book and learnt a great deal along the way, even though I thought I already knew almost everything. After that I had a period of intensive work in newspapers. Although I've never been a full-time reporter, I've had articles published in almost every newspaper of Bishkek including several projects with the "Vecherniy Bishkek" newspaper.

**E.Z.:** *Have you published any articles in "Literaturniy Kyrgyzstan?"*

**A.K.:** Yes, I actually started my reporting activity in "Literaturniy Kyrgyzstan." I began as a prose writer and then started serious reporting with Valeriy Semenovich as my teacher. I deeply appreciate this person and everything he's done for me. Thanks to his training I



published an article in “Literaturniy Kyrgyzstan” which was well received.

**E.Z.:** *What were some of your other journalism engagements?*

**A.K.:** I had good teachers in journalism including Kozmenskiy, Uriy Goncharuk, and Andrey Chelnokov who later became one of Russia’s millionaires. There were many people I considered it a privilege to work with. I even published articles for the sports press; it wasn’t a problem at all for me and it was actually quite influential. I still believe that a word properly said in its proper place has much power.

**E.Z.:** *Tell us about your current work as a writer.*

**A.K.:** Currently my life is rather hectic, but I cannot say that I’ve given up writing. I usually work for quite a long period on a text because I think it’s the duty of a Russian writer to polish the language and preserve it. As Anatoliy Strugatskiy said “Russian language and literature is our most precious possession.” Yes, I’m still writing and will write even more in future. I’m taking with me much of the material that will be published in future texts. The last book I wrote, two years ago, was about Kyrgyzstan. The title is “Parastan” and hopefully it will be published in this year.

**E.Z.:** *You are moving to Saint Petersburg. What are your feelings about leaving us?*

**A.K.:** On the one hand I’m sad about leaving; I don’t know how long I’ll feel that way. On the other hand, you see, I am growing older and whenever you can start something new, from the very beginning, it’s such a pleasure. Any philosopher can confirm my view, that to break with one’s past experience, no matter whether positive or negative, is always exciting!

**E.Z.:** *Are you going to teach there?*

**A.K.:** I’m not sure yet, but I hope so. I have a choice between literature and teaching. Both are attractive. Teaching is a wonderful occupation. You never get old while you can interact with

young people, and I’ve always liked to share my experience.

**E.Z.:** *So do you plan to remain in this environment of writing and literature after you move?*

**A.K.:** Yes, I plan to remain absorbed in this world; but at the moment I can’t imagine what my final goals will be.

**E.Z.:** *How can a person express himself? By publishing an article?*

**A.K.:** Certainly that’s possible! For example an AUCA student has just had some of her poems published. First she showed them to me and then she published them.

**E.Z.:** *Tell us a little about your students. Who are they?*

**A.K.:** Most of them are good, ambitious and interesting people who want to reach high standards in their work. We educate good specialists. We know they will be working in respected organizations. When students enter AUCA they are encouraged to develop their own vision and understanding of life.

**E.Z.:** *Who or what are you proud of?*

**A.K.:** I’m proud of many of our students, including our Uzbek and Turkmen graduates, but it wouldn’t be right for me to name individuals.

**E.Z.:** *Do you like to travel?*

**A.K.:** Yes, I adore traveling.

**E.Z.:** *I think travel is such a source of inspiration.*

**A.K.:** Yes, it may be, but I can also write about things I have never seen. Using my imagination it is possible to create another world!



Elizabeth Zalkind

## Improving English Skills:



*Having left their air-conditioned classroom on the second floor of Building 2, participants in an intensive English workshop including Renata Koluhanova, Kalyujina Lyudmila, Dima Kanisyev and Helen Smith take a walk in the Dubovyi Park. When they came back inside, they listed what they had seen, heard, smelled and touched and then put their sense impressions into a sequence.*

To build skills and confidence in communication and in academic English, staff and faculty participated in an intensive, four-hour-a-day workshop which I had the thrill of teaching from July 28 through August 1.

The participants are some of the most committed, interesting individuals I have had the privilege of getting to know during my visits to Kyrgyzstan and especially to the American University of Central Asia over the past eight years. It is wonderful to be among AUCA people because they are such “live wires,” so concerned with the welfare of the University and so supportive of one another.

Materials in our workshop included the Writing Handbook for the American University of Central Asia that I edited two years ago, the June 19 Boston metro newspaper, a DVD of the 30th Broadcast Season Celebration: A Prairie Home Companion with Garrison Keillor, and a 10-minute video about Newton North High School in Newtonville, Mass., where I

have taught for most of my career.

The sequence of workshop topics was making friends, parts of speech, sentence unity and variety, articles (a, an and the) and business correspondence. There were also related exercises in vocabulary building, speaking, presentations and writing.

Vocabulary building included work with homophones and homographs, prefixes and roots. Speaking included introductions of one another and pronunciation practice.

“Hi! How are you?”

“Heavens, you look happy, Helen!” posed quite a challenge, for instance.

So did creating dialogues using the “Th” and “R” sounds.

Participants also gave demonstrations, including how to count to 10 in Italian.



# A Week with Helen Fox Smith

Writing assignments tended to be personal essays, focusing, for example, on occasions when participants need to use English at AUCA.

How to use a, an and the was a special emphasis.

But even as participants dug into complicated concepts about article usage, they took breaks to enjoy songs including “Whatever,” “Honky Tonkin’ Lifestyle” and “Let Your Light Shine on Me” from the Garrison Keillor program.

Also, a special visit from Elizabeth Zalkind and Emil Lyu of the AUCA Communications Office helped the group follow up on how to write a resumé and a business letter with how to write a news release.

The best part of the workshop was the participants. They never stopped working hard, and they showed how much they loved to learn.

One faculty member in an intensive English workshop this summer gave her final presentation on Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 127.”

She described the playwright’s life and read the poem aloud. It ends with the line: “That every tongue says beauty should look so.”

Then, after she explained why this poem is her favorite one in the English language, she recited it again—but this time in Russian, just as she had learned it at the age of 14.

It was a beautiful moment.

Another time, a staff member gave the group her personal cucumber pickle recipe with a marinade of “celery, fennel, parsley, vinegar, sugar, salt and water” among other ingredients.

The previous day she had written a composition based on combining simple, complex, compound and compound-complex sentences.

Inspired by their efforts, I resolved that when I returned to Newton, I would make sure my students have a chance to read “Sonnet 127.”

*Helen F. Smith*



*Helen teaches Renata and Lyudmila in an intensive English workshop. They worked on assignments that ranged from pronunciation practice to poetry reading.*

*Helen Fox Smith, a 1964 Smith College graduate, teaches English and journalism at Newton North High School in Newtonville, Mass. She is the executive director of the New England Scholastic Press Association and a past president of the Columbia Scholastic Press Advisers Association.*

*Publications she has edited include Journalist’s Handbook for the New England Press Association, Springboard to Journalism and its Teacher’s Manual, The Official CSPA Stylebook, Scholastic Newspaper Fundamentals and Scholastic Newspaper Critique for CSPA.*

*She has taught in programs for high school students and teachers at Boston University, Columbia University and, through the Soros Foundation, in Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Georgia, Hungary and Romania. The U.S. State Department’s ACCELS program also sent her to teach in Kyrgyzstan.*

*At AUCA, she was a visiting teacher in 2006, 2007 and 2008. She has also edited the Writing Handbook for the American University of Central Asia and helped edit its 2007 Catalog.*

## AUCA HOSTS FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS DAY

*Students in Central Asia today face many challenges as they struggle to balance the demands of school, work and family, so you might think that improving the balance between development and the local environment is the least of their concerns. The passionate students who participated in the first Environmental Presentations Day on November 29 demonstrated that they truly are committed to lead their generation in promoting sustainable development in the region.*



In Conference Hall 2 (CH-2) on the AUCA campus more than two-dozen students presented the results of their group research to their peers and several visiting professionals in the environmental field, including other AUCA faculty members and consultants working locally for the World Bank and the Green Alliance of Central Asia. The students were enrolled in Assistant Professor Martin Ossewarde's Clean Development Policy & Practice course. According to Professor Ossewarde, the course is "aimed at teaching students the basics of environmentally sustainable development, and offering practice in skills essential for environmental professionals, such as cross-disciplinary cooperation and applied critical thinking."

The presentations were the culmination the group project, a core component of the course (50% of the final grade), which also includes written reports.

"Student numbers are growing and this semester student responses have been very enthusiastic," said Professor Ossewarde. "That is how the idea arose to have the groups present to a joint meeting of both classes and open it up to other interested students and faculty. Moreover, each group was assigned a coach, who was also invited," he added.

Out of the eight groups, two focused on environmental problem areas, including climate change and the ozone layer. Three painted pictures of a sustainable future for production and consumption in rural and urban areas. The remaining three groups spoke about avenues to reach goals in environmental ethics, ecological tax reform, and green marketing.

Students in the globally focused groups relayed in simple terms how climate change and ozone depletion have a serious impact on all life on earth. They gave a vision on what needs to be done by governments and businesses, and urged the audience to participate in every possible way.

Urban and rural groups spoke about the impact of rapid urbanization, changing lifestyles, lack of awareness, and incentives for sustainable development. Rural communities need more means and influence to make decisions affecting their own future. Urban residents should use the current construction boom to build houses that require less energy. Municipalities should develop more recycling opportunities, and do more to develop more efficient and pollution-free forms of public transport.

The Environmental Ethics group stated that several religions and philosophies teach people to appreciate the earth as our home and to take good care of it. They quoted inspiring stories of how communities found strength in their common worldviews to

work together for a better quality of life and environment. Three Business Administration students formed the Green Marketing group, which studied ways to promote recycling and reduce waste, among others by introducing reusable cotton bags to replace plastic bags—a feasible option for a region rich in cotton. In addition, more and more countries are using tax reform to discourage pollution and wasteful use of resources.

The guest professionals left the presentations very impressed with what they saw. "I personally really enjoyed that event. I like the fact that all speakers were passionately speaking about their topics and did their own bit of research to prepare their presentations," said Nurdzhan Jumabaev, rural development consultant for the World Bank.

"The majority of presentations were outstanding," proclaimed Dr. Emil Nasritdinov, assistant professor of anthropology at AUCA. "An excellent choice of topics covered a very broad spectrum of environmental issues, ranging from large global problems to specific issues in Kyrgyzstan. Students approached their tasks seriously and were well prepared," remarked Dr. Nasritdinov.

Professor Ossewarde was likewise very upbeat about the environmental leadership potential of his students. "As for me, the first Environmental Presentations Day was a success. Students were very well prepared and enthusiastic. The contact with environmental professionals was very stimulating for them as well. They have really caught on. That is rewarding for me, because more of tomorrow's leaders need to become environmentally conscious!"

The next Environmental Presentation Day will take place in April 2009.

### Reactions by Visitors

*It was so good that students said Kyrgyzstan should learn from other countries, but also find its own way to sustainable development.*

**Mika Tsukamoto,  
Green Alliance Central Asia**

*I personally really enjoyed that event. I like the fact that all speakers were passionate talking about their topics and did their own bit of research to prepare their presentations.*

**Nurdzhan Jumabaev,  
Rural Development Consultant**

*The majority of presentations were outstanding. An excellent choice of topics has covered very broad spectrum of environmental issues ranging from large global problems to specific issues in Kyrgyzstan. Students approached their tasks seriously and were well prepared.*

**Emil Nasritdinov,  
AUCA Anthropology Programme**

*Martin Ossewarde teaches the Clean Development Policy and Practice course, which explores the causes of environmentally unsustainable development in organizations and society, teaches principles of environmentally sustainable development, and looks at ways in which they have been or could be implemented worldwide. The course is policy-oriented, multi-disciplinary, and aimed at stimulating skills in cross-disciplinary cooperation and problem solving.*

*Martin Ossewarde holds an MSc in general economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam, with a minor in public administration (governance). He worked in the environmental field in the Netherlands' Ministry of the Environment, several advisory commissions of the NL Government, and in JI Quarterly, an international journal about the Kyoto Mechanisms. He played a minor role in the first KG National Communication on Climate Change, and this is his fourth year teaching sustainable development at AUCA.*





*American University  
of Central Asia*



## *USAID Grant Moves AUCA Toward U.S. Accreditation*

American University of Central Asia has received nearly \$500,000 from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to prepare for accreditation from a regional U.S. accreditation body. AUCA is the first Western-style university in Kyrgyzstan to initiate the accreditation application process.

Once accredited, AUCA will be recognized internationally as a school that meets the standards for US regional accreditation as demonstrated by periodic self-study, planning and peer review. U.S. regional accreditation certifies that AUCA has the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes and that its students are benefiting from its curricular and extra-curricular programs. The multi-stage accreditation process requires a lot of time, effort and financial resources.

The USAID grant will help to underwrite the costs associated with the planning essential to achieving this status and to institutionalizing its ongoing accreditation preparedness.

"AUCA is grateful for the support by USAID and the American people for its accreditation planning grant. USAID has been a major donor to the University, and we are proud to be among the recipients of its funds for educational development," said AUCA President Ellen Hurwitz.

The USAID grant for accreditation planning will underwrite the hiring of US expertise to guide faculty and staff through the assessment process, to design a plan

for the recruitment of more students from across the region and for future educational facilities. Within the next two years, these specialists will help AUCA to design the plans, oversee their implementation, monitor their effectiveness, write reports, and train the University's community for accreditation preparedness.

The grant enabled AUCA to attract a highly experienced and well-rounded administrator as Executive Director of University Planning and Chair of the University Accreditation Committee. James Wood, who has been serving as Vice President for Administration and Finance and Assistant Professor at Kazakhstan Institute of Management and Strategic Research (KIMEP) since 2005, will oversee university planning with special focus on U.S. accreditation and facilities development.

The USAID grant will also finance the work of Director of International Recruitment. Charter Morris, who previously served as International Programs Advisor at the University of Mississippi, will employ his expertise to enhance the AUCA enrollment strategies.

This press release was made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of the American University of Central Asia and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



# INITIATION CEREMONY 2008









# DIVERSITY WEEK 2008











## Strong Charity Spirit

AUCA students are very active in social activities and volunteer work. One of the vivid examples of their charity work is participation in the Rotaract movement and implementation of a number of social projects. We asked them to share more information about their club and activities.

*Ainura Eshenalieva: Tell us about your organization, its goal and main ideas.*

**Eldiar:** We received official registration three years ago but our club was formed in 2000. Most of the founders were students and as we grew we decided we needed official registration. It was a new serious level of commitment for us.

**Alisa:** The name of our club – Rotaract – is formed from two words: rotation – constant motion and action – and to be active, producing new ideas and projects.

The main goal of our organization is to develop the idea of charity in our society; to make it clear to all people that charity is not only helping the needy but also helping yourself.

*AE: Who are the participants of your club?*

**Alisa:** Young specialists age 18 – 30, students, volunteers who are willing to work for positive changes in our world. The main objectives of our club are: professional growth, developing leadership skills, charity, and developing international cooperation

Our members develop in these four directions as they face different situations and meet different people, developing their leadership and communication skills through involvement in our club activities.

**Eldiar:** Also I would like to note that our club is a part of an international organization called Rotaract. The idea of its creation came from the Rotary Club of Bishkek and we still have a good relationship with them. So our project is directed not only to fundraising but also to the idea of charity promotion within our society. I think that our experience has brought good results. Three years ago we held our first charity activity at the Rotary Ball. We have received support mostly from Rotary members and then we started to hold our own charity parties twice a year and use the money raised from ticket sales for charity. In that way our guests support our project.

*AE: How many charity activities have you held and what are they?*

**Eldiar:** I would like to mention our main projects: Arranging a dinner for WWII veterans, project “New life for old clothes,” “The 5 K Run,” the Pumpkins Project, Children’s Day at the Orto-Suu orphanage, the Winter Shake party. Orto-Suu orphanage is our target group and we help them regularly.

*AE: Is it right to say that you are a “youth wing” of Rotary Club of Bishkek?*

**Eldiar:** Actually we are not, but that is a common opinion. In our club we have mostly students or young professionals. Many people think we only cooperate with Rotary in terms of fundraising, but we do much more. We have mutual cooperation and often do projects together and learn from each other.

*AE: How do I become a Rotaract member?*

**Eldiar:** We do not have any restrictions on membership;



the procedure is very simple and the only requirement is to stay in touch and be active. We believe it is not right to limit a person in the area of charity. So when a person becomes even a passive member of our club he or she will still talk about it with their friends and share about our organization and its ideas.

**AE: Who is the Chair of your club?**

**Eldiar:** We have an election system; we elect the Rotaract President for a period of two years. We have full transparency in all our reports. Currently I am the President of the Rotaract Club and Alisa is the Vice-President.

**Alisa:** We don't put pressure on our members because we realize they are involved in many other activities; that is why we have passive and active members. If someone cannot participate in one of our meetings, we inform them about the meeting via email. Actually I would call all our members active because each of them tries to contribute in this way or that. Currently we have 25 members here and also some more who live abroad but keep in touch with our club's activity and stay involved.

**AE: What are your plans for the future?**

**Eldiar:** This year we're planning to do more to promote our club. We would like to inform other organizations about our aims and activities. Many people think that we give grants or send people abroad, but we don't. We think it's important to give people true information about our organization.

**AE: You have a chance to address our students. What would you tell them?**

**Eldiar:** In AUCA students decide for themselves what future they would like to choose. There is no pressure here and free will and independent thinking are highly valued. I would like to wish for every student, regardless of their program, to find their place in life and realize their gifts and talents. And we are glad that our Rotaract club exists thanks to exactly this kind of active people who support our ideas. You know, before Rotaract I had never been involved in charity. But after our project in the Orto-Suu orphanage I realized that I can really do something good for them and it is not necessary to be a big investor to change somebody's life for the better.

**Alisa:** I support the words of our President and would like to wish for everyone to be optimistic and if interested please come and join our club.

*Ainura Eshenalieva*



## From Heart to Heart

Charity is one of the best activities we can engage in. It is rewarding to help needy people, so the students of AUCA regularly participate in charity. But up to the present, there has been no club in our university, which would unite all students in their charity activity. So we decided to create such a club, called the "From Heart to Heart." The members of our club are kind people who care about the destiny of children, elders and disabled people. The main goal of our club is not only helping people but also giving them some moments of simple joy, which are so limited in their lives. Since our club was established, we have conducted many different charity campaigns. One was an auction of old clothes. The money earned from the auction was used to buy food for older people. It was so nice to see their happy faces when we brought the food and enjoyed some fellowship with them. We also visit orphanages and give



them much needed clothes, toys and stationery. And, of course, we never visit them without taking some chocolate.

Our most recent visit was to a home for elderly people on New Year's Eve. We brought them a Christmas tree, decorated it and made a little celebration of the New Year for them. We held a successful fundraising campaign for this event. The famous confectionery company "Kulikovskiy Tort" gave several boxes of sweets for the babushkas and dedushkas. Everybody enjoyed

the tea party organized by the members of our club! We hope that more of our students, professors and staff will help us in our charity programs and become active in this worthwhile activity.

*With best regards,  
Coordinator of "From Heart to Heart"  
Faizulina Yana*

## Top Students Rewarded for Academic Excellence and Extra-Curricular Leadership



On September 3, in keeping with its annual tradition of celebrating the pursuit of knowledge and honoring excellence both in and out of the classroom, students, alumni, faculty, staff, parents and friends gathered in the main auditorium at the American University of Central Asia for the Knowledge Day Ceremony to recognize the academic and extracurricular leadership of more than 80 AUCA students. But as AUCA President Ellen Hurwitz reminded the audience, the campus leaders recognized will someday step up to become the leaders of their communities, of their professions, and of Central Asia.

President Hurwitz honored 5 outstanding seniors on this year's President's List, which requires a cumulative grade point average of 3.8. Awarding the certificates to the students, President Hurwitz mentioned that "these students are truly keepers of the great tradi-

tion of a liberal arts university, broadly and deeply educated and well prepared from an imagined and realized life of creative achievement. We salute them, their parents, and the faculty and staff who have guided and nurtured them to such outstanding performance." Another 84 students, nearly 7 percent of the entire student body, were honored for earning a spot on the Vice President for Academic Affairs List, which requires a cumulative grade point average of 3.67. Forty-five of these hard-working students are earning degrees in the Business Administration, International and Comparative Politics, or Economics Programs – the three most competitive programs at AUCA. In addition to their excellent academic performance, most of the nominees for the Vice President for Academic Affairs Award sacrificed their valuable time and energy to take leadership roles in a variety of activities, including volunteering for the Freedom House and the AUCA Business Clinic and participating in numerous conferences and forums. Bermet Tursunkulova, AUCA's new Vice President for Academic Affairs, awarded the certificates to these students, who according to President Hurwitz, "have the same range, the same capacity for truly outstanding achievement and for truly outstanding leadership accomplishment as they become alumni."

Nikolay Shulgin, Dean of Students, and Vice President Tursunkulova named the recipients of the Leadership Award, which is granted to exemplary students demonstrating leadership in extracurricular activities and community service.

It was an event that few will forget. Proud parents will remember how they watched their children step onto the stage to be honored for their accomplishments. And the students will remember the satisfied feeling of having all their hard work and dedication recognized by the entire AUCA community. As soon as the official part of the ceremony was over, the audience was invited to mingle and listen to wonderful classic music performed by a Kyrgyz musician.

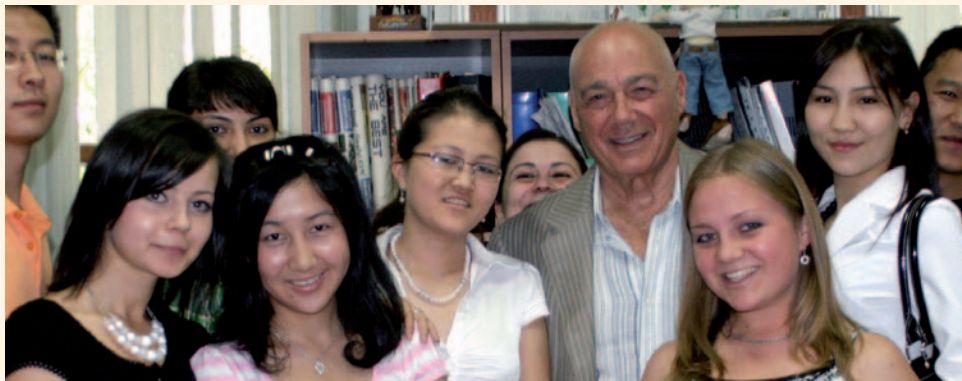
## The Star Student Newspaper Becomes Independent

On September 24, long expected by many – some with anticipation, some with mild curiosity, and some with trepidation – it happened: the first issue of the student newspaper New Star appeared in print. Hundreds of students, faculty and staff witnessed the terrific launch of this 'long-awaited' baby – born healthy and strong. The entire 900-copy circulation was gone in a few minutes. New Star is the successor of AUCA's internal student newspaper, the Star, which received official registration from the Kyrgyz Ministry of Justice, transforming it into an independent student newspaper.

"Independence is great progress. It means a new era of journalism and new opportunities for student reporters," remarked Nikolay Shulgin, Dean of Students. "It offers freedom of expression and freedom of choice, and imposes great responsibility for content. I recommend that New Star reporters always observe objectivity and provide a balance of opinions."

The newspaper has changed its title to New Star and adopted a new editorial policy. From now on, the paper will expand the variety of articles it publishes and will focus on student life on AUCA's campus and beyond. New Star will promote the educational, cultural, political and economic enlightenment of the student community.

"The state registration of our student newspaper gives many opportunities to Star reporters," stated Dilnura Khalilova '09, a former Star reporter and a student in the International and Comparative Politics Program.



"Now we can develop our own agenda-setting plan and concentrate on what AUCA students are interested in reading. Also, New Star can participate in different competitions among student newspapers. Of course, the most valuable thing is the independence. For every journal-

ist, independent work is very important. Currently, we are working to build a strong New Star team and develop our newspaper," continued Khalilova.

New Star will be a bi-monthly student newspaper, which will chronicle significant news and events happening in the AUCA community and beyond. It will feature in-depth profiles on the unique students, faculty and staff of AUCA and other universities.

New Star is open to students across all university majors who are interested in learning and expanding their skills in print journalism. They will have an opportunity to apply the theoretical background gained in their courses and to learn skills that are normally impossible to teach in classrooms.



## Better opportunities for matriculation

Interview with Emil Ilebaev,  
Chair of the Preparatory Program

**Charter Morris:** As the Head of the Preparatory Program, where do you see the Preparatory Program going in the next few years?

**Emil Ilebaev:** In the next few years, the Preparatory Program will expand up to 200 students and achieve the status of Central Asian Preparatory School (CAPS) which will prepare students not only for AUCA but also for other universities worldwide.



**CM:** What do you see as the main benefit of the Preparatory Program?

**EI:** The Preparatory Program's main benefit is in that it provides better preparation in English and math. And indeed, the comparative study of scores of students enrolled to undergraduate departments without the Prep year shows that they have lower preparedness in both English and math. This fact clearly shows that we provide students with better opportunities to matriculate into AUCA.

**CM:** Who is the typical Preparatory student? What are the differences between the daytime and evening programs?

**EI:** A typical Preparatory Program student is a highly motivated and targeted student who makes deliberate steps toward higher education with the help of the Preparatory Program. As for the differences between the daytime and evening programs, the daytime program is designed for high-school graduates, while the afternoon program caters for those who still study at high school. There is no difference in motivation; either of them has excellent chances to continue into the university.

**CM:** What makes AUCA's Preparatory Program stand out compared to other language training programs in Central Asia and in the United States?

**EI:** The AUCA's Preparatory Program is different in both the content and the rate. Our curriculum is more intense than in any other language course, and the rate is high as well. This gives us the opportunity to prepare students in the best possible way within the shortest period of time.

**CM:** How competitive do you think AUCA's Preparatory Program graduates are for admissions to AUCA?

**EI:** Our graduates are highly competitive. During the period of their study at Prep they fully adapt to the conditions and standards of AUCA. About 80 percent of our graduates are yearly admitted into AUCA.

**CM:** Besides AUCA, where do some of the students go after completing the Preparatory Program?

**EI:** Some of the Prep students attend the program only to improve their English. These students do not plan to apply to AUCA. Instead, they use the knowledge they acquire at Prep to apply to other universities abroad. There were some students who clearly stated from the very beginning that they had been planning to apply to universities in Europe and US. It is a great chance for both types of students!

*"For me, the Preparatory Program helped me to get some knowledge. Besides that, I met different students from different countries and cultures, which really made a good impression on me. As I have had a good experience from AUCA, especially the Preparatory Program, obviously I would tell about this to all my Afghan friends who would benefit from this opportunity."*



Ahmadi Nelafar, Kabul, Afghanistan  
Preparatory Program Day Student



*"I chose the AUCA Preparatory Program because of English language, the quality of education, and the possibility to go to a better university."*

Ghassem Danesh, Mashhad, Iran  
Preparatory Program Day Student

*"Coming to the Preparatory Program, I have seen how much it is useful for a student to have a preparation prior to coming to AUCA. Now, I can say that I have improved my English and learned what I didn't know before. Of course, the Preparatory Program helped me and is helping. I have received skills in essay writing and critical thinking. I developed my writing and other skills by studying here."*



Gulnara Janibekova, Dahoguz, Turkmenistan  
Preparatory Program Day Student



*"AUCA is the best university in Kyrgyzstan. That's why I always tell my friends to study in AUCA. I'm very happy to study here in AUCA. Because it was my dream. Because AUCA is a good way to get a great education."*

Kamil Rizashov, Jalalabat, Kyrgyzstan  
Preparatory Program Day Student

*"I think that the studies at the AUCA Preparatory Program is very good. I have studied here for three months, and my English level has become better than before. The Preparatory Program helped me to prepare for university studies. My composition, TOEFL, English for Academic Purposes, and grammar all gain progress. So, I'm very thankful for my teachers and AUCA. I like the Preparatory Program. I think that if I have a good idea, I can communicate it with teachers and my classmates."*



Ren Weirong, Urumqi, China  
Preparatory Program Day Student



*"I enjoy my studies at the AUCA Prep Program, and I really like my teachers. They are highly qualified and are really nice. Every day I find out something new for myself. Our lessons are very interesting and active. I had never taken the TOEFL before (the Prep Program). The first time when I took it, my score was 450, but now after studying some rules and after explanation of my teacher, my score is 530. I'm really happy, and I believe that after graduating from the Prep Program, I will pass my exams to the University and become a freshman!"*

Mirzoeva Makhina, Dushanbe, Tajikistan  
Preparatory Program Day Student

Charter Morris



## The MBA Program

Earning an MBA degree at AUCA gives students not only the fundamentals of financial accounting, market research, or strategic planning – but builds confidence and strengthens abilities to effectively tackle everyday challenges in business. The program helps students gain a deep understanding of all aspects of business and develop the skills to adapt quickly and excel in the increasingly dynamic and global business environment. An MBA from AUCA promotes graduate students' careers to the next level and helps them become visionary, ethical leaders in the business world and community.

The MBA Program focuses on business management fundamentals as well as the latest trends in accounting, marketing, finance, human resources, and operations management. Through practical application of knowledge, students develop and strengthen the skills vital for success in business: research, presentation, decision-making and critical thinking. The MBA Program broadens students' perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills and builds up professional networks by forging relationships with colleagues from many different countries and cultures.

## A unique entrepreneurial spirit

**Charter Morris:** As the Head of the MBA Program, where do you see the MBA Program going in the next few years?

**Azamat Akelev (Chair of MBA):** MBA program is going to slightly grow in size, but not much – we would like it to be niche, high-quality, English-language program which provides cutting-edge knowledge for Central Asian business leaders. We strive to continuously enhance the quality of the educational learning experience for our students.

**CM:** What do you see as the main benefit of an MBA degree? Who is the typical MBA student?

**AA:** The main benefit of our MBA program is significantly better career opportunities for our graduates. Another great benefit is the strong network of friends and colleagues that they build here. The typical MBA student is a young and ambitious professional working for a Central Asian or international company, who wants to grow personally and professionally.

**CM:** How would you rank AUCA's MBA Program – compared to other Central Asian universities and compared to universities in the United States?

**AA:** AUCA's MBA program is a unique combination of local practical entrepreneurial skills and best-practice, case-based theory from the Western corporate experience. It is less expensive than in the US or Kazakhstan due to lower costs, but it has the unique entrepreneurial spirit of American University in Central Asia.

**CM:** How do you think AUCA's MBA graduates are impacting business in Central Asia?

**AA:** Our grads are working throughout the business environment of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, in such companies as Deloitte, KPMG, «Kargoavia» LTD, Bishkek Chamber of Commerce, KICB, Shanghai WEIXING Electronic Co., Ltd China, "Kumtor", "FORESTER" etc. We are proud of our success!

## Theory put immediately in practice

*Interview with MBA student Shakhida Nurkhadjyeva*

**Charter Morris:** Shakhida, what was your life like before coming to AUCA?

**Shakhida Nurkhadjyeva:** I studied for my bachelor's degree at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University. My background



is in humanities as a linguist. I graduated in 2007. In my 4th year of studies I was employed by the Central Asian CDMA Forum (CACF), which promotes 3G cellular technologies and helps op-

erators in Central Asia to grow and compete.

**CM:** What made you decide to pursue your MBA?

**SN:** My boss suggested that I should pursue an MBA. I have been working for CACF for 2 years, and I know a lot about business by practical experience already. But it is always good and very important to learn the fundamentals that will help me improve my skills.

**CM:** Do you work while you are studying?

**SN:** Yes, I am working full-time for two organizations. So, it is difficult – I cannot deny it. When working a whole day, after 6 p.m. your mind turns off automatically. But, nonetheless, when you have the opportunity to learn, why not? If you want to do something, you have to sacrifice a little.

**CM:** Is the MBA Program worth the sacrifice?

**SN:** Yes. Learning is always good, especially when you are trained by such a pool of professionals. I am happier now. Once I start something, I need to see the results. And the results will be shown in my work.

**CM:** What new skills have you learned in the AUCA MBA Program?

**SN:** I have learned more about business negotiations and lots of other things that I use at my work. When dealing with the executives, you have to be very careful and precise. Within 3-4 months here I gained a great amount of knowledge on how to position myself and behave in the business world. This is really excellent to investigate something new and be able to apply it immediately in practice.

**CM:** Do you have any advice to give to young men and women who are interested in pursuing a Master's in Business Administration?

**SN:** Most of the time I prefer not to advise – it's really up to individuals to decide. I will say that the MBA is a good general program; it gives you a background that once you put into practice will guarantee success. Also, I will say that studying in the MBA is a decision to invest in yourself. Once you enter into the University, make the most of it. Do your own work



and don't take credit for someone else's work. Even if there is an honor code, follow it. Those who don't follow the honor code and be honest may get away with it, but they will be the loser at the end of the day.

**CM: What are your plans for the future? Do you see yourself starting your own business?**

**SN:** I strongly believe I will use the knowledge that I gain here in my future business career. I want to try to perform well and continue to work in this business life, taking a leading position. At the Central Asian CDMA Forum, we educate operators and government agencies. In a way, we are instructors. I plan to be a better instructor with our technologies. I would like to see and take part in the growth of 3G technologies. But so far, I have personal satisfaction, I think besides working 24/7, you should enjoy what you are doing. I do enjoy it!

## Investment that pays off

*Interview with MBA student Vladislav Lutsenko*

**Charter Morris: What was your life like before you joined AUCA family?**

**Vladislav Lutsenko:** First of all, I finished #37 gymnasium school in the English language department. My first university was Kyrgyz State University of Construction, Transportation, and Architecture. After finishing my first year at KSUCTA, I transferred to International University of Kyrgyzstan. My major was finance and credit.



Since my first year of undergraduate studies, I have participated in SIFE – Students in Free Enterprise. And I represented Kyrgyzstan in the SIFE World Cup in 2005 in Toronto, Canada. I was only supposed to be an observer at the World Cup, but when some students from Kyrgyzstan were not able to participate due to travel problems, I was asked to be a substitute on the Kyrgyzstan SIFE team. It was a great experience, but it was crazy. I had to borrow a suit from another student, and I had to memorize the students' project while in the airport.

After finishing at IUK, I worked one year in advertising. I still work in the advertising sphere, but now I am also studying at AUCA.

**CM: You say you work while you are studying. Are you working full time?**

**VL:** Yes, I have been working full-time since my last year at IUK. My first position was as a service center specialist at one of the telecommunications companies in the Kyrgyz Republic, MegaCom. After just one year of working, I was transferred to another position within the same company as an advertising specialist. Now I am working on the advertising side. I love working here because it gives me great salary, great benefits, and a great team of people. Recently, my company even won an award from Kazakhstan for best medium-sized

business. Here I found all that I want. I have an interesting job – I work and design materials for the company; I negotiate with business partners for future cooperation; I manage the budget; and I work on advertising campaigns.

**CM: What influenced you to think about pursuing your MBA at AUCA?**

**VL:** I entered the MBA to improve my business skills and to receive greater knowledge of business discipline. My current job is my present focus, but I am also thinking of my future.

**CM: What are some of the skills you are learning in the AUCA MBA Program?**

**VL:** First of all, I needed to undertake business education in English, because I studied only in Russian in my previous university. So, studying in English gives me the chance to know the subjects in English and to learn English business terminology. Second, AUCA is the only university here which has the American approach to education. It is democratic, but you have deadlines which are demanding and I respect it very much.

**CM: What is your view of the MBA Program at AUCA?**

**VL:** It is very challenging and sometimes overwhelming for me and my group-mates. But there is no other way for it really. It is a one-year program, which makes it very intense. But even though it is hard, none of the students want to change it to a longer program. No one wants to study for two years.

**CM: Do you feel that the program is helping to propel your career?**

**VL:** Yes. Partly, I feel the benefits of the program now because I use many of the skills I have learned in my work. But I feel that the greatest benefit will come later. I think that the MBA Program is a tool that students can best use after having obtained some experience. A student can take a class in management or accounting and improve his knowledge, but he cannot say that he is ready to be a manager or an accounting expert. One has to have experience in order to know how to use his education.

**CM: What recommendation do you have for young men or women who are interested in obtaining an MBA degree?**

**VL:** My advice is not to wait for a good moment to pursue the MBA. It is best to pursue the degree while you are young, right out of college. Also, when you have begun your career and are working full-time, it is very hard to go back to school. So, I can advise that if a student has the opportunity to study full-time and not work, that it will be easier.

**CM: Where do you see yourself in the future?**

**VL:** I see myself starting my own business in the future, but first of all, I need more knowledge and experience in several spheres: financial accounting, management, and marketing. Once I have more knowledge and experience in these spheres, I feel that I will be fully ready to start my own business.

**CM: What does an MBA Degree mean to you?**

**VL:** Education and MBA especially is like any other investment – it pays off in the end.

*Charter Morris*





## *An Encounter with Germany*

### *A Study Tour for Students of the European Studies Department*

What can we learn from Europe? We, the peoples of Central Asia, struggling amid hopes and doubts in and about tomorrow can in fact draw a lot of lessons from its rich history, culture and political institutions. Europe stands out as a unique example of the relentless struggle for human, scientific, and technological progress. It appears as an example of a society which dared to overarch its national ambitions in order to create something unique and salient in human history for the sake of peace. It stands out as a glaring example of the perseverance and hard work of its people to progress in every bit of its long and colorful history.

This is what the students of the European Studies (ES) program could learn and bring back home after their 12-day study tour to Germany during the fall break 2008. The study tour was made possible after the ES department successfully applied for the DAAD scholarship. It was also made possible with the financial support of AUCA. The overall goal of the study tour was to introduce students of the ES program to the workings of German and European political and public institutions as well as to acquaint them with German and European culture. For every student participating in the study tour it was the first encounter with Europe. As students studying European history, politics, economics, society and culture, they greatly benefited from lots of meetings with representatives of different political, public and scientific institutions. These meetings have enriched and expanded their understanding of how the European and the German political systems work and

what makes their political and social institutions strong and effective.

The official visit program during the study tour was very densely arranged. Sometimes, students were exhausted from too many appointments. The political and public institutions were picked by the ES program itself. Long before the study tour was started, there had been long correspondence with institutions and organizations in Germany aiming to figure out topics for presentations and discussions. At this opportunity, the program would like to extend its thanks to DAAD Representation Office in Kyrgyzstan and its head Dr. Gisela Zimmermann, the European Commission Delegation Office in Kyrgyzstan and its head Dr. Joerg Kettelsen, and Prof. Franz Eichinger, the former ambassador of Germany to Kyrgyzstan and the part-time instructor of the ES program, for their valuable help in arranging meetings with political institutions in Germany. Thanks to our and their joint efforts our students could visit and have valuable discussions with the German Bundestag, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Delegation of European Commission in Germany, the representation of North-Rhine Westphalia in Berlin, the Embassy of Slovenia in Germany, the Foundation for Science and Politics in Berlin, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bonn, the DAAD, the Center for European Integration Studies, and the Center for Development Studies. Students were exposed to discussions of different topics. They included the role of smaller EU countries within the EU, German cooperation with Central Asia, the EU Strategy for Central Asia, the Ger-





man role in the EU, the German federal structure, the role of the German States in the EU, and the significance of Central Asia for Germany and the European Union. Students could get firsthand experience from working of these institutions, challenge their previous knowledge and experiences and get new ones. In their turn, our inviting organizations acknowledged intelligence, dedication and high professionalism of our students.

In addition to having meetings with political and public organizations, the study tour gave us the chance to get expertise and consultancy on the curriculum of our program. The European Studies program in the AUCA is new and unique in its art as it is the only program in Central Asia which offers European Studies as a major. As a new program it is still experiencing “birth pains” stemming partly from the need to assert its curriculum and partly from the lack of qualified faculty. To share our experiences with our curriculum and to learn more about European Studies from our partners abroad, we moved to the universities of Magdeburg and Osnabrueck which, like us, were the first in Germany to open European Studies Programs. Our students could learn about existing exchange programs and the possibilities of further study in both these programs. Students were happy to learn that the master programs of these both universities are open to them provided they will demonstrate good academic achievements in their home universities. To our common satisfaction we also learned that our curricula are to a great extent similar. We are particularly happy to say that thanks to these first visits our partner programs in Germany have already expressed their interests to cooperate with our program. For our students it was unforgettable to meet their mates in Germany and have informal discussions with them, share their experiences, and create personal contacts.

The study tour was not only about having discussions and meetings. It was also an enjoyable encountering with German peoples, their history and culture. The whole cultural and event program was organized and financed by DAAD. It included visits to museums, theatre, sight-seeing tours and visits to famous exhibitions. It is with pleasure to remember our excursions to the Felix Nussbaum museum in Osnabrueck, the world migration history exhibition in Bonn, the memorial walk through the Holocaust museum in Berlin, the colorful Friedensreich Hundertwasser

house in Magdeburg, the museum of German history or the sonorous Beethoven gala concert both in Bonn. The students were excited at all these events. They felt a bit of the German culture was oscillating in all these places. They enjoyed encountering with common German citizens challenging their patience with their yet slow German. From talks to German students, peoples on the street, service clerks in the hotels, guides in the museums, our students could learn for sure that Europe is multilingual. Thus it is vital to know at least two foreign languages to understand it. We in the program are proud to say that our students – thanks to bilingual education they get in our program – could develop intercultural competency and language proficiency.

To conclude, I would like on the behalf of our students to express my appreciation to all those institutions, in particular the DAAD, for giving us a great chance to visit and experience Germany. At this point, we would highly recommend that other programs of AUCA apply for this great opportunity.



*Serik Beimenbetov*  
European Studies Department Chair



# TRAVEL NOTES



Thursday, December 18th

When there was snow in Bishkek, on the warm side of the continent it was really hot, not only because of the climate. It was a real safari. Professor Hersh Chadha organized a workshop for his students Emil, Tatiana, Sheila and Anita. We had a unique chance to see the desert and mystical mountains of Hatta, close to the Oman border through Nikon D3. This camera has ISO 200-6400 with resolution from Lo-1 (100) till Hi-2 (25,600!). And you can get to 11 frames per second. Today – it is one of the fastest photo cameras in the world. We used wide and zoom lenses, and the result was wonderful. With bright colors of wild places with oasis, sand, sand again and deep blue sky. Have you ever been in the desert? You know, it is like a miracle from the tales of Ray Bradbury.

*By Tatiana Kravchenko*

A year ago I could not even imagine that I would face such an opportunity. I thought it would somehow elude me or just pass me by. Now, all my emotions and feelings of what I have seen for a week just overflow my mind. Everyday is a challenge to my previous experience, to all the skills I have gained. And it only makes me eager to learn and understand more about my career path. I am glad to work with Hersh W. Chadha and his team.

Last Thursday we took a trip to Hatta area close to Oman. Exotic relief of rocky mountains, warm breeze, picnic, sunset and a yellow hummer H2 as a man-made contrast left a lot of impressions. I think Nature can be beautiful unless a man touches it. But we did not hurt Nature, we just captured it on hundreds of shots by a D3 Nikon camera. I enjoyed that!

When one can see a result of his or her fervency he or she is getting one step closer to success. And I am happy to see the results of what I keep doing.

*By Emil Lyu '07*

Photo by Hersh Chadha



## SUPPORT AUCA



What does it cost to plant the seed of academic discovery? We can't 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 lifelong learners, expand the frontiers of knowledge and excel in every aspect of their lives.

The cost of educating each student is \$3,000 per year, while the average student only pays \$1,000. The difference comes from your generous donations to our Annual Giving Fund.

More than ever, contributions from friends, alumni and parents are essential to maintaining the quality

of our academic programs, and they ensure that students are afforded the best experience at American University of Central Asia.

We are certain that all of us reflect upon our experiences at AUCA with pride and gratitude. The University has made great strides over the years, but there is still much to do to elevate AUCA to the next level. So please join us in making a gift to the AUCA Annual Fund today, to ensure that current students will continue to enjoy the attentions of dedicated faculty and staff and that future challenges of the University can be met.

## Your gift can make a difference!

You may send a **check** (this is tax-deductible in the U.S.A.) payable to: **American University of Central Asia Foundation:**  
The AUCA Foundation  
c/o Emta Hill  
47 Wildcliff Road  
New Rochelle, NY 10805

You may make a **credit card** gift (tax-deductible in the U.S.A.) on our web site at [www.auca.kg](http://www.auca.kg) or by contacting us at [develop@mail.auca.kg](mailto:develop@mail.auca.kg)

You may wire funds to:  
Demir Kyrgyz  
International Bank CJSC  
Account no:  
1181000500164692  
Bank Code: 118001  
SWIFT: DEMI KG 22  
Beneficiary: American  
University – Central Asia

Correspondent bank:  
American Express Bank  
Ltd.  
SWIFT BIC:  
AEIBUS33XXX  
Routing number:  
124071889  
American Express Tower  
200 Vesey Str.  
New York, NY 10285 USA

You may call  
+996 (312) 66-11-20  
or email  
[develop@mail.auca.kg](mailto:develop@mail.auca.kg)  
and our volunteers will  
come to your office/home  
to pick up the gift

**You may bring your gift to AUCA**  
Office of Development  
American University of  
Central Asia  
205 Abdymomunov Street  
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic  
720040

### Key ways that the annual fund helps:

- student scholarships;
- faculty salaries;
- academic resources, technology and library.

### Your contribution will take us one step closer to our goal!

Please keep in mind that 60% of our students require scholarship assistance, that student tuition covers only 40% of our annual operating expenses, and that the remainder must come from the financial support of donors.

**If you are considering making a gift to the Annual Fund through the matching gift program, please verify whether your company has a matching gift policy.**



American University of Central Asia

205 Abdymomunov st.,  
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic 720040  
Tel.: (996 312) 663309  
Fax.: (996 312) 663201  
[aucamagazine@mail.auca.kg](mailto:aucamagazine@mail.auca.kg)  
[www.auca.kg](http://www.auca.kg)