

Class of 2022 Celebrates Graduation at Khorog and Naryn



The procession of Naryn graduates on the way to the Ceremony.

On 18 June 2022, amid the majestic mountains of the Pamirs and Tien Shan, the graduation ceremonies at the two campuses at Naryn and Khorog brought together parents, faculty and many distinguished guests who came to congratulate the students for their academic achievements and promises of successes yet to come.

Although a year has passed since the historic first graduation of UCA, for the second batch of graduates the year went by much too fast. The Convocation Ceremony is an important

and exciting moment in the life of every graduate and was celebrated in a warm and nostalgic atmosphere. Lectures, exams, and sleepless nights are left behind and from this moment the 66 graduates begin a whole new stage in their lives.

Proudly displaying their graduation gowns, with its creative combination of motifs from the rich cultural traditions of Central Asia, the event began with a resounding applause as the graduates entered the marquee and took their seats in anticipation of their de-

grees. Many warm sentiments and congratulations were conveyed to the graduates.

Among the distinguished speakers at the graduation were Princess Zahra Aga Khan; Almazbek Beishenaliev, Minister of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic; Deputy Governor Nilufar Aslamshoeva of Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Oblast; Governor Sabyrkul Ashimbayev of Kyrgyzstan's Naryn Oblast; Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Chairman of UCA's Board of Trustees; and Prof. Sohail Naqvi, UCA's Rector.

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UCA Awards Night 2022

June 17 was a night of celebration as achievement awards were presented to the Class of 2022 at UCA's annual Awards Ceremony at both Khorog and Naryn campuses. Students were recognized for leadership, community service, as well as academic and related achievements.

During the five years at UCA, students participate in a number of diverse activities, establish clubs with the objectives of serving the community, engage in learning, and launch entrepreneurial and environmental ventures.

Khizer Zakir receiving the Outstanding Graduate of UCA, Innovative Diploma, All-Rounded Leadership and Outstanding Co-operative Education Student awards from Dr Mohssen Moazzen, Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at UCA.

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This year, the honour of Valedictorian went to Sumaino Shakarbekova of the Class of 2022, who majored in Communications and Media from the Naryn campus and comes from the remote village of Ishkashim in Tajikistan. Excerpts of their speeches are on page 2 (below).

The speeches were followed by the long-awaited degree presentation ceremony. Enjoying their moment of fame on stage, with endless applause of fellow students and camera flashes, the graduates received their tickets to a new journey in life.

[Watch the Convocation Video.](#)

Excerpts of Convocation Speeches

Princess Zahra Aga Khan

UCA Trustee



“On behalf of the Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all in Khorog, Naryn, and around the world, to the graduation of the Class of 2022. Before I address the graduates, who are soon going to join the ranks of the distinguished alumni of UCA, may I take this opportunity to highlight some extraordinary achievements of UCA that are likely to have a significant impact on the socio-economic development of Central Asia.

“...The several collaborative agreements UCA has signed with the various ministries are making a valuable contribution towards helping to promote and achieve national development agendas through public-private partnerships.

“...Climate change is a global problem, but solutions and adaptation measures have to be locally defined and implemented. The reason that UCA teaches Earth and Environmental Sciences is that climate change will affect Central Asia as it will the rest of the planet. This sad reality will have several outcomes for the students of UCA. First of all, it will affect your daily lives and your families. It will force changes to the way you



UCA graduates in Naryn celebrate with hats in the air.

grow and distribute food; to your approach towards resources; and to the way you will build house in the future. It will also create a raft of new jobs and careers that will be essential in the decades to come. Not only will this area, like others, require technicians and engineers who are capable of adapting daily life to a new and different reality, but it will also force changes to architecture, transport, forestry management, water conservation, livestock management, trade, and effectively all areas of daily life. Most importantly, you, the students of today, will be the scientists of tomorrow. Those who can model and predict natural disasters as well as predict future changes in the climate, and the effect it will have on humans in the next hundred years or more. These scientists will be greatly in demand in various different careers, from biology, geology, and geography, to physics and chemistry, because all these fields will evolve with climate change, and career options will be varied and crucially important. Unfortunately, sooner than we think.

“...It is the Chancellor’s hope that the graduates of the School of Arts and Sciences will not only find employment opportunities in the region, but also that the graduates will themselves create employment opportunities and successful businesses to invigorate the economy of the entire region. Building an active and successful economic environment will improve the lives of all communities and add to social stability and wellbeing for all.

“...The generosity of donors has made it possible to you to access an internationally benchmarked quality of education; to them we all owe a deep debt of gratitude. Their

continued support will be pivotal to ensuring a strong financial foundation for UCA to sustain itself in the decades ahead.

“As you continue your professional journey, our hopes and aspirations go with you. Ultimately, UCA’s success will be measured by the success of its graduates. No effort has been spared to provide you with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable you to thrive in a rapidly changing world, and it is our dearest hope that you will underpin your professional growth with the values of pluralism, responsible citizenship, and ethical leadership.”

Mr. Almazbek Beishenaliev

Minister of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic



“On behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, I bring Greetings to His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of the University of Central Asia,

Princess Zahra Aga Khan,
Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha,
Rector Prof Sohail Naqvi,
Trustees, Faculty, Graduates, and their Families, and distinguished guests.

“On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, please allow me to congratulate the graduates of the University of Central Asia on the successful completion of their academic pursuits.

“The Ministry highly appreciates the work of the University of Central Asia, and I am honored to attend the second convocation ceremony of UCA, an integrated regional centre of higher education established by charter in 2000.

“UCA is a research and development university dedicated to improving the quality of life of those who live in the mountainous regions of the country. This campus in Naryn is committed to contributing to Kyrgyzstan's development by offering modern education and research programs that produce knowledgeable, skilled, and creative graduates.

“...Education and science are the engines of economic advancement, and our country is directing all efforts to improve the level of education of the population.

“I am confident that UCA graduates will make a significant contribution to the development of not only Kyrgyzstan, but also of the entire region, and beyond.”

Mr. Sabyrkul Ashimbaev

Governor of Naryn Oblast,
Kyrgyzstan



“I would like to emphasize that the building of the University of Central Asia, which is an international centre of education and culture in Naryn, has created attractive opportunities for social, economic, strategic, and infrastructural development in the region.

“We once again thank His Highness the Aga Khan for choosing Naryn to build such a world-class Central Asian university.

“...The University of Central Asia, as a partner, has already implemented a number of investment projects aimed at developing the city of Naryn and Naryn oblast.

“These include the development of the Naryn Master Plan with financial support of the Aga Khan Development Network;



Graduates at the Khorog campus pose for a group photo.

launching of the Smart City project; creation of videos related to tourism development; and attraction of financial resources from the Government of Switzerland towards a resilient and sustainable development of the Naryn region, are noteworthy achievements. In addition, a number of social infrastructure projects have also been implemented and contributed towards the development of Naryn city.

“...I wish the graduates good health, long life, and a bright future! I sincerely hope that each of our graduates will be able to use the acquired knowledge in their lives and become good specialists and fine human beings.

“I am confident that our graduates will contribute to the development of Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan. It is my hope that our partnership with the University of Central Asia will continue to gain strength, and in the future, we implement many more projects to make Naryn a real centre of knowledge and culture.”

Ms. Nilufar Aslamshoeva

Deputy Governor of Gorno-Badakhshan Province, Tajikistan



“On behalf of the Government of Tajikistan, I bring greetings to His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of UCA.

“...on this auspicious and memorable day, on behalf of the Executive Authority of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region and myself, I sincerely congratulate all faculty and graduates on reaching the next goal



Three generations of the family admiring the UCA degree.



Faheem Ashraf at the Khorog campus with Rector Sohail Naqvi, flanked by UCA Trustee Sharofat Mamadambarova (left) and Deputy Governor of GBAO Nilufar Aslamshoeva

and follow the path of professional activity of students and wish everyone of you prosperity and new successes.

"...When laying the first brick in the building of the university in 2004, the Leader of the Nation, President of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon noted that "This intellectual space should find its rightful place among the educational institutions of the country and its graduates working in various fields should contribute to the prosperity and progress of our beloved homeland."

Dr. Shams Kassim-Lakha

Chairman, UCA Board of Trustees



"On behalf of the Board of Trustees, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this important day for UCA.

"This is only the second graduation in the life of this young University. However, it is very gratifying that already, many from the Class of 2021 and a quarter of your own graduating class have made a mark for yourselves and the University of Central Asia by gaining admission to graduate studies at reputable universities in Central Asia, Russia, Europe and North America. Several have received full scholarships. Many more have secured

interesting jobs while some are rightly reflecting on their future options.

"...As we celebrate the success of UCA's students, this is a befitting occasion to acknowledge the central role of the faculty. They have worked closely with the students under the leadership of the Rector, Professor Sohail Naqvi, the support from Senior Management of UCA, and the dedication of the Dean and the Associate Deans.

"...Universities are particularly complex institutions. Those which are responsive to their multiple stakeholders over changing times and make policy decisions with a long-term horizon, they are the ones which remain relevant and survive and thrive over centuries. "In this context UCA's trajectory is guided by the vision and support of the Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, and the Presidents of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, as well as the wisdom the Trustees bring to far-sighted policy making.

"...Having gone through multiple careers, in business, higher education, and public service, including as government Minister, allow me to share an important thought with you today.

"Most people are convinced that the main ingredients for success are the quality of the education you receive, and the technical skills of your chosen discipline. I would like to offer a different perspective.

"A good grounding in your professional skills is certainly very important and universities do this. But there is plenty of evidence that only 20% of your success will be directly determined by your professional education.

"...So what does 80% of your success depend on? It is People Skills or often described as soft skills. It is well known that as you move up the ladder in your career, even more im-

portant than technical knowledge and skills are the soft skills.

"Ultimately, your success will depend on your leadership abilities, your personality traits, attitude, behaviours, and interpersonal skills.

"...The education you have received was designed to instill in you a pluralistic mindset to help unify cultures and nationalities, prepare you for responsible citizenship, as well as ethical and enlightened governance; to think logically and to think critically. In short, you have been provided resources to help you become leaders in whatever is your chosen career.

"...While the Board of Trustees wish you every success, we will be closely following your progress and achievements. Your successes are UCA's successes, and we hope that as lifelong learners you will stay connected with your Alma Mater. Visit us often to share your experiences with the new students to inspire and give them an advantage in life."

Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi

Rector, UCA



"...Hard to believe that already a year has passed since the first batch of students from the School of Arts and Sciences graduated. As the hills surrounding our campuses, resound with the sound of music from the Convocation, and as Spring leisurely transitions to Summer with a riot of colours across the campus and a hint of warmth in the breeze; the realization must surely be coming to you that it is time to fly the nest and soar across new horizons opening up.

"...Remaining true to the Chancellor's vision, you, the graduates, have strived to understand our communities and how we may chart a path for their development.

"This has also been a year of conflict and loss, and through all of these setbacks, you have carried on. Life never progresses as planned and your demonstrated ability to adapt will serve you well.

"...Parallel to the academic journey that has

brought each of you here, is your individual journey and struggles that have shaped you. Hidden behind this picture are the prayers, efforts, love and endless support of your parents, family and friends. Graduates, recognize that today has been made possible by all your loved ones.

“And now, at the conclusion of my term as Rector, it is time for both you, dear graduates, and I to bid adieu -- with endless gratitude.”

Sumaino Shakarbekova

The Valedictorian of the Class of 2022



“First and foremost, I want to congratulate all of us for successfully closing this chapter of our lives despite all the difficulties that we faced during the pandemic. We made it! Congratulations!

“...I come from the roof of the world, the Pamir mountains in Tajikistan, a place abundant in natural beauty and unique traditions where the people are known to be kind, loving and hospitable. I grew up in a remote district of Ishkashim.

“...Graduating from a high school where the medium of instruction was Tajik, I wasn’t able to fully understand my instructors at the beginning. I was even scared to share my room. Adjusting to the campus life with all its fantasies and imponderables was clearly a challenge. But the love, kindness and care we received made it easy to settle into university life and forget the homesickness.

“...First of all, I would like to extend special gratitude to His Highness the Aga Khan, the Chancellor of the University of Central Asia and to the Board of Trustees for their remarkable vision and support for a university dedicated to mountain communities in Central Asia. It is due to your vision that we found access to such a superior quality of higher education.

“...The Student Life Team for working relentlessly, supporting us under any circumstances, and making life on campus more exciting and engaging, thank you.

“And most importantly, I would like to thank



Aisha Nugmanova proudly displays her UCA degree. From left to right: Dr. Almazbek Akmataliev, Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Almazbek Beishenaliev, Andrew Petter, and Dr. Maxim Khomyakov.

every single parent for always being by our sides, supporting our decisions and helping us to achieve our goals.

“...Today, at this graduation ceremony where a significant chapter in our lives is coming to end, I am sure many of us may feel anxious and fearful of life after the university, the life out of the yellow spaceship. But it is my belief that each of us graduating today has the potential and capability of becoming an inspiration for seeking change in oneself and the world through education.

“...I want to close my speech with an inspirational quote by Frederick Robertson who once said, “Instructions end in the school-room, but education ends only with life.

Congratulations to the Class of 2022!”



Class of 2022 celebrating graduation in Khorog.

Dr. Almazbek Akmataliev – New Trustee at UCA



UCA is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Almazbek Akmataliev as the new nominee of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic on its Board of Trustees.

Dr. Akmataliev is the Rector of the Academy of Management under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, a position he has held since 2018. Dr. Akmataliev has a long and impressive record of contributions in education and public administration. He served as Rector of Naryn State University from 1999-2010 and has held senior government positions including First Deputy Governor and Akim of Naryn (1992-1996).

Dr. Akmataliev is a Candidate of Philosophy (1985) and received the title of professor in 2004, and honored Worker of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic (2009). He is author and co-author of two monographs, three university textbooks, and 27 scientific and popular science articles.

UCA Awards Night 2022

Among the students that received high honours were:

Naryn Campus:

- **Manizha Murodbekova:** All Rounded Leadership Award; Outstanding Community Service Award.
- **Elena Nam:** All Rounded Leadership Award.
- **Sarvinoz Toshpulotova:** Outstanding Co-operative Education Student for Computer Science; Outstanding Graduate of the Year Award for Computer Science.
- **Roza Amanbekova:** Outstanding Co-operative Education Award for Communications and Media; Outstanding Student Athlete Award.
- **Oraz Giyoev:** Outstanding Student Athlete Award.
- **Aqila Hassanzada:** Innovative Diploma Research Award for Communications and Media.
- **Sumaino Shakarbekova:** Outstanding Graduate of the Year Award for Communications and Media.
- **Valeriya Nikiforova:** Innovative Diploma Research Award for Computer Science.

Khorog Campus:

- **Khizer Zakir:** Outstanding Graduate of UCA, Innovative Diploma, All-Rounded Leadership and Outstanding Co-operative Education Student.
- **Gulshan Mastonova:** UCA's Award for Outstanding Community Service.
- **Mahtob Gulayozova:** Innovative Diploma and Outstanding Athlete Award.
- **Aidai Maksadbekova:** Outstanding Graduate of UCA, Outstanding Co-Op Student.
- **Hangoma Kokulova:** All-Rounded Leadership Award.
- **Khudonazar Imomyorbekov:** Outstanding Athlete Award.

One of the highlights of the Awards Night at the Naryn campus was an inspiring address by Madame Roza Otunbayeva, a former President of the Kyrgyz Republic. She encouraged graduates to use the skills they have acquired to seek solutions to the many challenges that lie ahead for Kyrgyzstan and the region. She reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving the quality of education in the country at all levels, and noted that, "One of the most important projects of the Kyrgyz



Prior to attending the Awards Night ceremony in Naryn, Madame Roza Otunbayeva on a tour of the UCA campus accompanied by Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha (left), Dean Maxim Khomyakov (centre), and Dr. Barkat Fazal, Diplomatic Representative of AKDN to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Republic and the Aga Khan Development Network is the University of Central Asia, which I regard as a world class university, delivering academic programmes of international quality."

While paying tribute to the national and international faculty at UCA for the key role they have played in educating young men and women, she reminded the graduates that, "Success in today's world is not simply about achieving material success; it is about the journey of acquiring knowledge to improve quality of life. I am very proud that this journey brought you to Naryn and the University of Central Asia."

UCA Trustee, Dr. Andrew Petter, congratulating the winning graduates on Awards Night.



The event was attended by parents, members of the Board of Trustees of UCA, faculty, staff and students, and preceded the graduation ceremony which was on the following day.



Graduates create memories of their achievements on Awards Night.

“UCA has Great Potential for Development of the Region”

On June 26, 2022, Sherali Kabir, Minister of Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Tajikistan visited UCA's Khorog campus. He was accompanied by high-ranking government officials, including Alisher Mirzonabot, Governor of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, and Nazarzoda Rizo Shodi, Mayor of Khorog.

During the visit Mr. Kabir expressed his appreciation of the quality of construction, and the facilities available to students studying at the University of Central Asia (UCA). He remarked that “UCA has great potential for development of the region, and I would like to see more cooperation between the University and the Government of Tajikistan.”

The Minister shared his suggestions for UCA to organize short courses on Business Administration and the growing role of artificial intelligence. He noted that it is neces-



Sherali Kabir (second from left) in the laboratory reviewing research being conducted on plant specimens.

sary to create short-term vocational courses to prepare qualified technical workers. He also stressed on the training of specialists in the field of geology and industry in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Tajikistan.

UCA Conducts Training for Tourism Executives

UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education successfully concluded the second round of Executive Entrepreneurship Training for Tourism Leaders from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Tourism experts from Central Asia were invited to conduct an intensive training for 20 days in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

"The training covered themes such as HR, taxation, accounting and management. During the training, we shared real-life prob-

lems and learned a lot from each other's experiences. The trainers were experts from the field and knew how to deliver the message," said one of the representatives from Travelstans, a Central Asian travel agency.

The training was conducted in partnership with Accelerate Prosperity and funded by the European Union. The goal of the training was to improve Business-to-Business linkages in the region by encouraging further investment in the tourism sector.



Programme participants exploring scenic locations near Dushanbe.

Expanding Horizons of SPCE Graduates



"I started my journey at SPCE in 2012 by enrolling in an English language course. The skills and knowledge I learned have taken me a long way. Since then, I secured a DAAD scholarship and graduated from a master's programme in Germany," said Adolat Shabozova from Tajikistan.

Adolat later joined UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education in 2018 as a Math Instructor. She also recently attended the TechWomen 2022 Programme (an initiative of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs) in the United States. "SPCE has played a significant role in expanding my horizons and opening new doors of opportunities for me."

RUNA – a Musical Fashion Performance

Museums have the power of transforming objects placed inside them. This was demonstrated through the musical fashion performance organised by the Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit (CHHU) of the University of Central Asia at the National History Museum in Bishkek. CHHU and the National History Museum brought together a group of talented young people working in different fields, including fashion design, music, jewelry, drawing, and theatre production, to present a performance focusing on the history of ancient tribes who lived on the territory of Eurasia. According to Aibek Baiymbetov, UCA Research Fellow and the artistic director of the performance, the project was aimed at raising the value and relevance of museum spaces, which can also serve as living art venues.

Performance called RUNA took inspiration from the Barsbek stella, a large stone monument containing runic writings that commemorate the life and death of Barsbek Khan, the ruler of the Yenisey Kyrgyz in the 8th century. The replica of this stella is currently installed on the second floor of the



A performance by the Kyrgyz Kairyk musical ensemble.

National History Museum. On the night of the performance, the stella surrounded by dozens of high wooden poles came to life symbolically and literally, thanks to the creative reinterpretation of Jibek Birikova, director of the theatrical part of the performance.

The event was organized as part of the Inter-

national Museum Week by the International Council of Museums, promoting this year's theme "The Power of Museums". UCA's Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit supported this event as part of its Cultural Production Programme and partnered with the creative studio 7th Heaven and the National Museum of History.

UN Deputy Secretary-General visits UCA Naryn

On June 11 UCA had the honour of welcoming Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, to the Naryn Campus. Ms. Mohammed conveyed gratitude for the long and continuing partnership between the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and agencies of the United Nations, and expressed admiration for the visionary leadership of His Highness the Aga Khan. Having visited the melting glaciers of Tien Shan, she shared insights into her vision for community engagement and transnational partnerships. She looks forward to deepening partnerships with AKDN to make "the shared ethos viral".

Ms. Mohammed was accompanied by Ozonnia Ojielo, UN Resident Coordinator in Kyrgyzstan, and Dr. Barkat Fazal, Diplomatic Representative of the Aga Khan Development Network in Kyrgyzstan.



Ms. Amina Muhammad at the library of UCA's Naryn Campus.

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