# THE NEW STAR

independent student newspaper

ISSUE 1

**SEPTEMBER 30, 2020** 



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#### DEAR NEW STAR READERS,

Already we are into the fourth week of the Fall 2020 semester. The calendar year 2020 will go down in history as the most disruptive around the world since World War II ended 75 years ago, and we still have three and almost one-half months remaining. For the first time AUCA starts a semester fully on-line after concluding the second half of the Spring 2020 semester also on-line. It is extremely important to me that AUCA faculty and administration provide a very effective and efficient learning experience for all of our students. If we are not delivering to your satisfaction, please let me know, and let me know early so we can address any problems quickly. I know the faculty worked very hard this summer to adapt classes and syllabi for on-line teaching, after having to scramble in the Spring. We all learned a lot, and are in a much stronger position to maintain a successful learning environment.

We all have personal stories from this year of COVID that we will share with younger generations for years. «What were you doing Mom/Dad in 2020?» My family was fortunate in that nobody has been sick with the virus, but it was certainly disruptive for me and my wife Lilia. We flew to Moscow on the first day of Spring Break ,March 13th, , expecting to return to Bishkek in ten days. I planned to visit my sister Jane in Australia who had been diagnosed with a very difficult cancer. But the day before my expected flight on the 15th, Australia shut down. Then a few days later Kyrgyzstan shut down also, leaving us with few options. We spent the next three and one-half months in Moscow staying in Lilia's mother's apartment, and then another nearly two months in the United States before we were both allowed to return to Bishkek on August 21st after 5 months and 8 days away, again, after packing a bag for a week.

It is hard to describe how happy we both were to return «home» to Bishkek. As we had only lived in Bishkek for 9 months before our odyssey, we were not sure how much we felt this was home. We are struck upon return how much we do now feel this our home for years to come. I was especially anxious to get back with the academic year approaching. Managing an on-line university from a three-hour time difference is reasonably doable, but from a ten-hour difference, not so much. In the US, I started to feel disconnected from the community. I am now really delighted to be back and seeing people in person while also making more effort to connect with the student body on Instagram and with bi -weekly Thursday evening «rap» zoom sessions, the first of which we held last Thursday. I really showed my age as students expected me to do some rap singing, when for me a «rap session» refers to talking, a discussion. Be careful of what you wish for, maybe one time I will concoct a rap song and sing for you!!

To conclude, I know everybody wants to know when AUCA will be able to return to our glorious campus. Unfortunately it is impossible to say. I certainly hope there will be no «second wave» of COVID, and we will be able to start the Spring semester in person, and possibly, but unlikely, we may be able to return to more normal operations later this fall. But whether and when we can do so is far beyond my powers. For now, let's all do the best we can in managing a challenging situation.

I wish all of you and your families good health, happiness, and success in the weeks and months ahead.

Dr. Andrew C. Kuchins
President of American University of Central Asia



#### DEAR STUDENTS,

#### Welcome to the new academic year!

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and extend my special warmest welcome to our freshmen and first-year graduate students. Welcome to the AUCA family! And, of course, our returning students, we are delighted to have you back! During these unsettling times, as we are starting our journey virtually this fall, we are counting on you, your eagerness to learn and grow, your energy and spirit, and your patience and perseverance to make this academic year the most meaningful and fulfilling of all. We, the AUCA faculty and staff, are committed to support you on this journey in every possible way. You are at the heart of everything we do. To provide you with a global experience in these times of isolation, this year, along with a wide variety of courses offered by our dedicated and inspiring faculty, we are also offering seats in online

courses at Bard College, Central European University, Princeton University, and other institutions through the Open Society University Network. I also want to bring to your attention the fact that many of our services are offered online. I advise you to take advantage of the online services of the Academic Advising Office, the Library, and the Shared Service Center. The Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC) also provides free, one-on-one tutoring in subjects such as Mathematics, Economics, Accounting, Programming, Writing, and more. I hope you study hard, realize your dreams, engage and contribute, make friends, and have fun!

Sincerely,

Nurgul Ukueva Vice President for Academic Affairs



### EDITOR'S NOTE...

Dear AUCA community,

I hope you all have started your semester full of energy despite the pandemic, which in some way or another has affected all of us mentally, and some physically. You might have read or seen our previous publications, but I am writing this to welcome and let freshmen students know about our lovely campus's independent student newspaper. This is a great opportunity for every member of AUCA to write and publish their thoughts and experiences. In this way you are able to practice your writing skills and learn and share your ideas. The only thing which needs to be considered is that your articles should

I should strongly highlight that The New Star is welcoming writers, photographers, designers, and interested active participants to join our team.

Don't worry if you've never written for us before! We love to feature first-time writers. To share your ideas, articles, and comments, contact newstar@auca.kg and visit our social media pages on Facebook and Instagram @newstar.

Take care of yourself and stay healthy!

Niloufar Rafat **Editor in Chief of The New Star** 



#### Window Eile Options Help

Greetings first-year students and other members of the AUCA community,

The Student Senate is extremely glad to welcome you to the AUCA family. The Student Senate is the only representative and executive body for AUCA student self-governance, and it is elected by all AUCA undergraduate students. The main goal of the Student Senate is to define and secure students' rights, provide for the welfare of the student body, ensure student participation in the general governance of AUCA, and represent students' interests in the administrative, academic, and extra curricular spheres.

Your journey through student life begins today. This path will be difficult and full of obstacles, but at the same time it will bring you a great deal of happiness, laughter, and joy. Try to get more involved in extracurricular life, whether it be volunteering or participating in student clubs. Remember that it is extracurricular activities that make one's student years unforgettable. However, do not forget that your main goal is to gain knowledge. Remember that your education depends on you alone. If, for instance, you are enrolled in the IBL or BA department but want to study psychology or TCMA, do not be afraid to switch, even if your parents or someone else insists on a particular choice. No one knows what is best for you except you. Now is the time for inner changes. Get out of your comfort zone, learn, and embrace who you are. Study absolutely everything, even what you may not like right now. Your erudition is your main weapon. Be yourself. I'm sure you will succeed. You are all great peers!

> Sincerely, Pavel Zalevskii **Student Senate Chairman**



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### A LETTER FROM NGA OFFICE

Dear NGA Class of 2020-2021,

ulty, and alumni in combination with your enthusiasm and spirit, we will be able to make this year one worth remembering! Your NGA year is special. During it, you will make friendships that last a lifetime, have the chance to make and learn from countless mistakes, build skills, and participate in numerous extracurricular activities and opportunities. Although we are starting this year online, our plan is to make sure that you still get to experience all of these things.

This year we are welcoming a diverse group of students from across Central Asia, including an extremely strong group of scholarship students and self-payers coming from both Kyrgyzstan and abroad. We are also welcoming back some of our Af-

ghan US Embassy Scholarship students who were only able to It is my absolute delight to welcome you to AUCA and to the arrive late in the last semester and are now finishing out their NGA Family! While I know that online is not the ideal way to NGA year before becoming freshmen. Seeing all of your shinbegin your university adventure, I firmly believe that through ing, excited faces at orientation was a great boost of energy for the hard work and dedication of our NGA Administration, fac- all of us working at NGA. Hearing your questions and seeing how eager you have all been to participate in classes in this first week even though we have been online, has made it a joy to teach you already.

> Thank you, students, for helping us get the year off to such a strong start already! Let's keep up the great work and make the 2020-2021 academic year one full of fun, learning and opportunity. We cannot wait to meet you all in person once it is safe for us to be back on campus, but until then, we look forward to continuing to meet with you online.

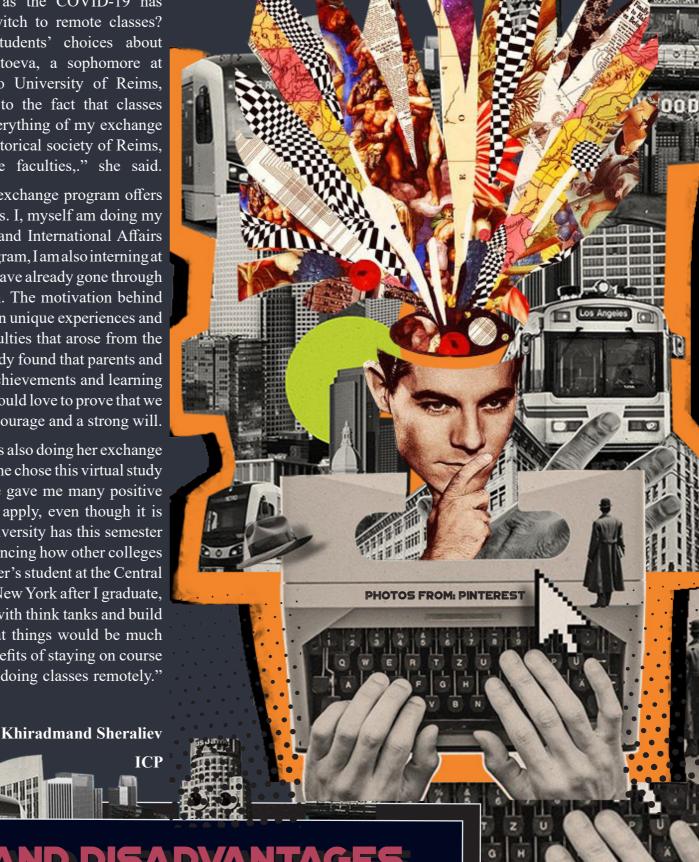
> > Alessandra Sztrimbely Assistant Professor, NGA

### VIRTUAL STUDY ABROAD: WHAT MOTIVATES EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Do exchange students see major disruptions, as the COVID-19 has forced colleges to close their campuses and switch to remote classes? Coronavirus has seriously affected AUCA students' choices about whether to study abroad or not. Tahmina Ustoeva, a sophomore at AUCA, who was selected by the Sciences Po University of Reims, decided not to do her exchange program due to the fact that classes would be remote. "I wanted to enjoy and feel everything of my exchange experience; a real atmosphere of diversity, the historical society of Reims, getting knowledge of politics with worldwide faculties,." she said.

Nonetheless, some students accepted to do their exchange program offers despite the outbreak and the move to online classes. I, myself am doing my study abroad this fall at the Bard Globalization and International Affairs exchange program in New York. As a part of this program, I am also interning at the European-American Business Organization. I have already gone through many new processes and learned a lot from them. The motivation behind my decision was to prove to myself that we can gain unique experiences and knowledge from virtual classes, despite the difficulties that arose from the present pandemic. A recent Brookings Institute study found that parents and teachers are both concerned students' academic achievements and learning process in 2020 from online mode of education. I would love to prove that we can make the best out of any situation if we have courage and a strong will.

Mariam Alqam, a junior at Al-Quds Bard College, is also doing her exchange at Bard College New York. When I asked her why she chose this virtual study abroad, she responded, "Graduates of my college gave me many positive views about BGIA. This vastly motivated me to apply, even though it is planned to be remote. Furthermore, my home -university has this semester online too. So I am interested in seeing and experiencing how other colleges run their online classes." Adam, an American master's student at the Central European University, says, "I plan on returning to New York after I graduate, and I'm participating in BGIA to gain experience with think tanks and build my New York network. Also, I was skeptical that things would be much better in Vienna (I still am), and ultimately the benefits of staying on course and doing the internship outweighed the costs of doing classes remotely."



### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF REMOTE STUDIES

2020 was a difficult year for all of us. The pandemic has taken many people away, and in order to protect students, many countries have decided to close educational institutions and continue online education. After studying remotely for a while, I have realized that online education has both positive and negative aspects.

Online education is a new step in our technological times. With technology, it is possible to learn anywhere in the world. Most foreign citizens come to AUCA and it is more convenient for them to study in this format. By my own example, if I have activities in other places or even staying in a neighbor country, I am still able to attend classes.

There are many disadvantages for online learning as well, but the worst one is losing the educational environment that we were attached to. If we were learning offline, lessons and extracurricular activities would be more engaging and interesting because we could make new friends and communicate with each other better.

But despite all the challenges of online learning and the fact that we are far apart, we can still build the AUCA community. Starting from my first days at this university, I felt I had already joined the AUCA community, because many AUCA students said from the very first days that we were not alone. In the future, I think we should continue to improve this community even when we cannot come to the campus—and each of us has to do a lot of work to improve it.

Esenbek Burkanov

SFW

## ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING MAKES YOU CREATIVE

With the transition to online learning, which is becoming the new normal, the medium has transformed. It was always possible to download language learning apps and study with a tutor online, but now during the regular academic year our language classes are continuing online. During the summer, I dedicated my time to learning Uzbek in an intensive language program that was completely online. My assumptions about online language learning were simple: I had tried some apps and online tutoring in the past, but the reality of online language learning as part of an academic curriculum was completely different— and certainly not so simple.

In our intensive program, we spent at least four hours each day engaged in language class, plus additional hours for homework and studying—all on the computer. It was mentally and physically exhausting to sit at the computer for hours trying to understand a foreign language through a speaker with the typical connectivity issues. Someone always forgets to mute or unmute themselves, someone loses internet connection midway through their speech, someone's internet is too slow to communicate, the sound quality doesn't come clearly the list goes on. Studying a language online was deeply frustrating due to the constant delays and technical issues, and my motivation to improve quickly diminished. It was essential to discover personal joys outside of class to keep my motivation for language learning alive. The usual tricks for improving your language skills, such as chatting with classmates or your teacher outside of class and watching movies or television shows from YouTube, didn't really work. I was just alone in my room and had already spent all day on the computer; and I couldn't bear to look at the screen for another hour or more. So this was the new challenge with online language learning: how to actually learn outside the digital classroom.

I found writing to be the most helpful form of practice because I could take a piece of paper and compose sentences as if I were talking to someone or to myself. It may sound boring, but it is truly satisfying. I began writing simple, diary-like notes of what I did each day, so that I could practice the basic sentence composition in my head and improve my writing and spelling abilities. Then I would go on to write short stories to incorporate more complex vocabulary and short poems to think of synonyms and words that sound similar or rhyme. It became a creative hobby away from the computer that allowed me to advance my vocabulary in a practical way.

Now that online language learning may be here to stay, it's important to think of new ways to practice and challenge ourselves to get the most out of our classes.

Kiiyha Gray MA Central Asian Studies





### MISINFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19

Increase of the coronavirus –COVID19 has created a global health crisis that has been influencing our daily lives. Each country's sense or agencies control that people should not have a close physical interaction during the pandemic. People have been facing many different and sometimes harmful ideas or opinions about coronavirus: false information is spreading through social media and word of mouth.

Social media platforms have long been recognized as a powerful force of how we can experience the world and ourselves. In general by the help of social media platforms we can recognize the world better, because we would be aware of what is happening in the world. Although, nowadays from the beginning of this year we can notice that there are a lot of harmful and incorrect information about COVID-19 in social Media which have made people depress and stressful. Besides social media people spread rumors about ways to treat COVID-19 which even caused to their death such as; drinking medical alcohol to sanitize inner body.

Indeed, almost all people around the world suffer from pandemic situation, but yet there is no way to skip and only patience and care matters. I believe that it is not a good way to trust all information that is spreading through social media and word of mouth. We have to observe and trust valid medical information.

Muborakkhotun Atobekova

PHOTOS FROM: PINTEREST

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### TEDX CLUB'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC



COVID-19 was a spontaneous disaster that has rapidly taken over the world so rapidly and affected the lives of people around the globe.

There are lessons to learn from this situation. We have learned to appreciate the moments we have and to preserve our lives and those of the next -generation. Wisdom, kindness, and respect were the upsides and the most important character traits that we needed in our day to day life. The most important lesson we could learn was to give hope to each other. Therefore, I am glad to share my activities during the pandemic that contributed to bringing hope to this community and to the wider region. The AUCA TEDx Club has played a major role in creating an AUCA community where everyone could feel engaged at an uncertain time. Via a week-long online program, AUCA TEDx Club gathered tips for important skills and topics ranging from psychology and emotional agility to philanthropy and epidemiologic issues.

As director of the AUCA TEDx Club, I provided virtual sessions during the first days of the pandemic. As COVID-19 was sweeping the globe, I contacted the head of TED, Chris Anderson, and the current affairs curator, Whitney Pennington Rodgers, under their online sessions, of the "TED Connects: Community and Hope, "a free, live, daily conversation series featuring experts whose ideas could help us reflect and work through this uncertain time with a sense of responsibility, compassion, and wisdom. The online participants were joined by a wide-ranging group of TED speakers, and each conversation lasted about

an hour. On Monday the theme of the discussion was introduced by Susan David a Harvard Medical School psychologist studying emotional agility. The following day, the theme of the discussion was "The healthcare systems we must urgently fix," featuring a speech by — Bill Gates Gary Liu, the CEO of The South China Morning Post, gave a talk called "What we can learn from China's response to the coronavirus" .These were some of the most interesting sessions that could provide effective tips to people during the crisis and I hope everything gets better so that we can follow our goals and plans in this academic year and get back to studies on time.



on the road—, back in the days of in-person teaching, it took me an hour to get to campus and an hour to get home. Because of the quarantine, I could not go out at all, and therefore I had plenty of time to enjoy myself and focus on my wellbeing. I had no excuses to procrastinate or to slack off on my studies. My spring schedule even allowed me to get a job to support my family financially. I believe I would not have the opportunity to work 40 hours a week from home if we had offline learning.

and therefore you must learn how to manage your time and to keep focused during online lectures. These days are different, but we should enjoy them while they last.

Karina Lou

BA

**PHOTOS FROM: PINTEREST AUCA.KG** 

### PERSONAL SHORT STORY OF MINE DURING THE PANDEMIC IN KABUL

"Waah corona, look what you have done! These masks have hidden the beautiful faces of our girls." Driver said this, turned his head to me, and continued, "O, pretty girl! Please take off your mask. I am getting nervous, see! Please, let me see your face once! If you do not, I will drive my car into that red one. If you do not, I will go straight on this street. I am not going to take you to Kabul University." I doubted him. Would he dare take me somewhere else? He did not look like a brave man; I did not need to worry.

In five hours, I had my flight to Bishkek. I needed to go to Kabul University to meet my cousin, who would take me to the airport. Five hours may seem like a lot, but not in Kabul. I would pass an unknown number of hours in traffic. And this uncertainty was what scared me the most. But now, a mad taxi driver was threatening to make me miss my flight.

"Please pay attention to your driving, you will cause an accident. And I am in a hurry," I said calmly. Under my mask, my face had already turned red from my anger, and of course, from the fear I was trying to conceal.

"Are you afraid of me? No, please do not be afraid of me! I am not a bad guy. Let me see your face once and I will drop you wherever you want. Do not be afraid of corona either."

Was I afraid of him? He couldn't do anything in the traffic, and the car was moving slower than the passersby. Corona? No, I had just gotten my PCR test and the result was negative, so I could now travel to Bishkek without any problem. But, I was afraid of him seeing my face and harassing me.I am not going to take off my mask

and show him my face even if he attempts to kill me. I thought of giving him a good answer: "I have corona and do not want you to get infected."

"No, no! Do not think of me. Waah, corona! I want to have corona if it means I am going to be infected by such a pretty girl." He once again turned to me, took his hands off the car's steering wheel, and opened his arms in a hug. "Come on, my dear, give me the virus."

"Stop the car! I want to get off. Stop it, mad man!" I shouted. He was now looking dangerous.

Don't do this to me, pretty girl. Please let me see that pretty face!" He slowed down the car, took the steering wheel in his left hand, and stretched his right hand to me, trying to take off my mask. "Let me see you, please!"

"Stop the car!" I shouted. He was not stopping. But the car was moving slowly, and I could see the walls of Kabul University. So I decided to get out while the car was still moving. I opened the door, and seeing his car's door open, he stopped.

"Don't do this to me!" he cried.

But I left the taxi and shut the door with great force. I tried my best to look angry and did not pay the fare, either. I felt pleasure inside and started walking toward the door of Kabul University, where my cousin was already standing. I did not pay, and he did not see my face. Things had gone well.

Hasina Ahmadi

### THE MAGIC OUTFIT

While I was in the USA, my dad met a man named Mr. Lawal from Lagos, Nigeria. Mr. Lawal is an amazing, open person, and well-known in his field. He has never been to Kyrgyzstan. He began to dream of a trip to Kyrgyzstan and bestowed a Nigerian national outfit he had designed upon my father, hoping that someday they would meet again in Kyrgyzstan.

Right after the winter holidays, our FYS professor, Ekaterina Galimova, asked us if we wanted to have a discussion with students from the American University in Nigeria (AUN). We agreed, and I thought to myself, "I can't believe the magic worked!"

We had one month to prepare for a debate on the topic "Money is the best motivation in the workplace." The preparation for the first online event was very intense: we searched for sources, watched videos, and finally had our debate.

The first online meeting did not work well; everyone was nervous, it seemed we would have to speak to a crowd of thousands. The AUN students felt uncomfortable too, but soon after watching introductory videos about the two universities, our anxiety passed, and everyone felt a wave of optimism. Although the first conference did not go as we expected terms of the number of students (some had lessons, while others had unforeseen circumstances that prevented them from attending), I think it was a wonderful experience for us to find out what people from another continent think.

About a week later, we were invited to participate in a second discussion. This time, the theme, "Post- colonialism in Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe," was connected to a FYS text and seemed to me to be more difficult. Everyone was very worried, but no one showed it. We prepared better and we held together somehow. I felt a certain spirit of friendship in the air: no one tried to answer better, to be stronger or smarter than the others; all the comments had a positive spirit. I cannot single out anyone in particular, as they all seemed to complement each other; we were like a real family. Personally, it seemed to me that it was not difficult at all to understand the Nigerian students: they just had a slight accent when they pronounced the sound [o]. We were used to hearing ['mʌni], while the AUN students said [moni]. But in general, there were no problems with understanding each other.

Dil Spi

I hope I can participate in international discussions more often, on various topics ranging from politics to the latest news in the world of sports. I believe that when talking about different topics, people will feel more relaxed, and such events will help people to establish friendly and professional contacts.

I am grateful to Prof. Galimova and the professor from AUN, Prof. Emilienne Akpan, for the great opportunity to practice our English and meet wonderful people. It seems like the Nigerian outfit did have a magical effect: with the magic outfit, the sorcery of friendship between our universities has begun.

Ratibor Goriainov

TCMA



### **ENACTUS AUCA**

Интервью с Айсулуу Токманбетовой, тимлидером команды Энактус АУЦА, победителей национального Чемпионата и полуфиналистов Мирового Кубка Энактус 2020.

-Привет! Расскажи, пожалуйста о себе!

Привет, меня зовут Айсулу я студентка четвёртого курса факультета управления бизнесом. Об Энактусе я знаю ещё со школы, когда была бенефициаром проекта ТІҒЕ. Наша команда заняла первое место, и я получила скидку на обучение АУЦА, с которой я очень мечтала и без раздумий сразу поступила туда. Сейчас я работаю в ІТ-компании Mad Devs, проектным менеджером и ассистентом проектного менеджера, а также работаю в Национальном демократическом институте, как комьюнити органайзер, и делаю различные проекты.

-Расскажи, пожалуйста, про ваш клуб, когда он был основан, с чего вы начали, что изменилось спустя годы существования?

Энакткрыус основан в 96 году, если не ошибаюсь, АУЦА это первоотватель SIFE в Кыргызстане, это также был один из первых клубов АУЦА. Проект создан для того, чтобы у студентов была возможность создать свои проекты. Это социальнопредпринимательские проекты, для нас важно именно помочь людям, а также чтобы они научились на этом зарабатывать. Сейчас на самом деле Энактус это довольно разносторонний клуб, где люди обучаются тому, как делать социальный, предпринимательский проект, как делать фандрайзинг, как организовывать мероприятия, PR, маркетинг, HR, мы стараемся сделать это все организовано, и цифровизировано.

Очень многое изменилось с тем, что раньше мы были полностью зависимы от АУЦА, то сейчас у нас есть какая-то своя устойчивость, у нас есть свои проекты для фандрайзинга, которые обеспечивают клуб, у нас есть своя структура, мы платим налоги, то есть можно сказать мы в какой-то мере независимая организация, которая имя АУЦА.

- Что мотивирует вас?

Лично меня мотивирует то, что я могу помочь другим людям и обучаться. Я верю, что каждого плена нашей команды есть желание томочь людям, чтобы сделать чтото другое, потому что, когда ты видишь людей, у которых что-то заметно в жизни изменилось, это вправду очень радует, даже если это один человек. На самом деле, есть одна история, которая меня очень впечатляет, эта девочка с Тайфа, она с Токмака, она после Тайфа

полностью поступила на NGA, на полную бесплатную основу, и когда я писала ей рекомендательное письмо, это было очень приятно осознавать, что наш проект, и я в частности могу помочь, и эта благодаря своей старании многого добилась, у нее сейчас есть свой бизнес, и она учится на скидке в АУЦА, вот такие истории, на мой взгляд они и мотивируют наших участников.

- Расскажите про ваши последние успехи, какой проект вы представили, что поспособствовало победе?

В этом году команда АУЦА спустя 14 лет впервые заняла первое место в национальных соревнованиях, мы вошли в топ 16 команд на мировом уровне, и вышли в этом году вместе с рейтингом 5 000 000. В этом году в Creative Spark был объявлен конкурс, совместно с Британским Советом. На самом деле, в этом году было много проектов в которых мы выиграли, у каждого из наших участников есть свои проекты в виде выигрыша.

Что поспособствовало победе, я думаю, это наша активная работа с выпускниками, у нас сформирована хорошая команда, и мы сформировали хорошую команду, также не могу оставить внимания наших академических эдвайзеров, которые помогли нам в полной мере осознать наш потенциал, показать как правильно, за это большая благодарность Айжан Джумалиевой, и Айбике Эсенгуловой.

- Когда последний раз Enactus Club AUCA достигал таких высоких успехов?

На самом деле, когда они достигли мирового уровня, мы, наша команда, пришла три года назад, Я, Жанаим Сагинбаева, Айгерим Сагынбаева, Айлин Исмаилова, Мира Жакшылыкова, Айжан, мы можем сказать вшестером довели команду до таких высот.

Bermet Mamyrova

LAS

#### **ISSUE PREPARED BY:**