

# THE NEW STAR

independent student newspaper

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# SENIORS' STORY: LAST TIME ON STAGE AS STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL WEEK

All students have seen the performance of the Korean delegation during Multicultural Week at AUCA. They have always stood out for their vivid, story-driven, and spectacular performances. And now we are ready to introduce you more closely to the heads of the delegation, Amaliya Abubakirova, senior at the Journalism and Mass Communications Department, and Artur Kim, senior at the Anthropology and LAS Department.

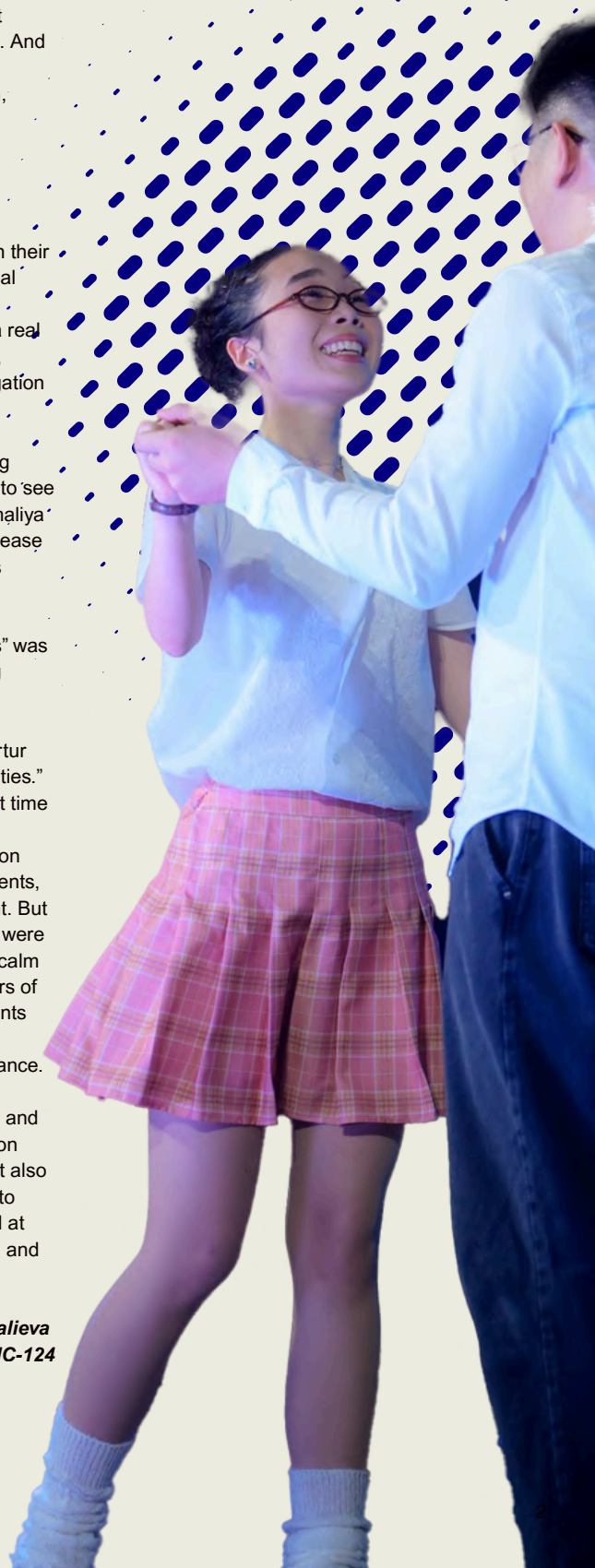
The first time Amaliya and Artur opened a delegation was in their second year, as during their freshman year, they were members of the Indian delegation. They really liked the atmosphere within the team: the head of the delegation treated all participants with respect and special attention. This approach later became a key characteristic of the Korean delegation as well. In their second year, Artur opened the Korean delegation, while Amaliya helped him with organizational matters. Together, they invited their friend Batyrkhan, a professional dancer, to join the team. Everything seemed to be ready, yet leading 15 people in their very first year turned out to be a real challenge, especially when it was their first experience managing the entire process. However, thanks to Artur's loyal and supportive leadership style, the team was able to present the delegation flawlessly throughout Multicultural Week.

A year later, they decided to reopen the delegation, of course, the Korean one. While recruiting participants, they expected to see roughly the same number as the previous year. "I expected to see 15 people, just like last year, but this time there were twice as many! There were 30 of us!" Amaliya recalls. They explain this surge by the growing popularity of Korean culture at the time: the release of *Squid Game*, the hit *APT*, and the rising global interest in Korean TV series. Inspired by this wave, they decided to link the 2025 delegation theme to *Squid Game*. During Games Day, the Korean delegation reached an entirely new level: the Forum was filled with Korean games, participants wore themed costumes, and students' desire to try themselves in "survival games" was at its peak. On performance day, the delegation received endless applause and overwhelming support, once again raising the bar, both for themselves and for the following year.

And then came their final year at the university. "I didn't plan to open a delegation this year," Artur admits. "Besides studying, I have two graduate theses, my main job, and personal responsibilities." At the same time, Batyrkhan, the delegation's choreographer, had to leave the city. For the first time in three years, Multicultural Week 2026 could have taken place without a Korean delegation. However, shortly before registration closed, Batyrkhan called and offered to open the delegation himself. Leaving all doubts behind, they decided to go on stage together one last time as students, as leaders, as a team. Once again, no one expected anything extraordinary during recruitment. But at the first meeting, 60 people filled the room. There weren't enough seats. Amaliya and Artur were in complete shock, and Batyrkhan, seeing the numbers, panicked as well. What helped them calm down and realize that everything would be fine, and even better than before, were the members of the delegation themselves. Students who had been with them for three years. First-year students who once sat in the audience and now stood on stage as performers. Each of them made a meaningful contribution; each left a part of themselves in the preparation for the final performance.

And now, the week when months of preparation and endless nerves come to an end. Amaliya and Artur are in the Kitchenette, looking at each other and realizing that this will be their last time on stage as students. With their final performance, they say goodbye not only to the university but also to professors and students who have grown used to seeing them perform. They say goodbye to their brainchild, the Korean delegation, which has long been associated with their names. And at the same time, they leave advice for future leaders: enjoy the process, understand each other, and do what you truly love.

**Nazbike Turgunaliyeva**  
**JMC-124**





## Chess Club



## Quiz Club

On a typical evening of the week, after lectures are finished, a certain quiet intensity pervades one of the university's rooms. A clock is pressed. A hand wavers. A move is made. This is chess on our campus, which is far from a boring, dusty board game, because that is an actual space for thinking and having fun. AUCA Chess Club members meet at least once a week, and each meeting is a different story. For some students, it is the very first time they ever played a serious game of chess. Others come as a way to unwind from the challenges of the week and stretch their minds differently. The club expanded surprisingly quickly. Already, two tournaments have been held, one in partnership with the Kyrgyz Chess Federation. This marked a first experience with a genuine tournament atmosphere for some participants: the sound of clocked time passing, the pressure, the stakes. This also marked a recognition that a chess club at a university could be a part of a larger community.

Askat Abdirasulov, member of the university's chess club, about us: *"To be honest, I joined the Chess Club of our university without any special expectations, but I quickly realized that this is not just a student club, but a place to improve my chess skills and make interesting acquaintances. What was surprising to me was that it does not matter what your level or rating is, because the club provides conditions for each participant. We not only play games, but also sort out mistakes, argue about moves, and learn to think more deeply. To tell the truth, I have been playing chess since high school, but it was the club that gave me the push to develop. The club unites students from different faculties, and this creates a strong intellectual environment. Often, after classes, discussions continue beyond the board, about studies, projects, and ideas. For me, the Chess Club has become a place where I do not only play chess, but also have a good time." Our club plans not only to prepare players for tournaments outside the university, but also to organize tournaments between universities. And in order for the classes to be effective, the titled chess players of the Kyrgyz Republic will be invited to workshops. Thus, our club not only organizes chess games, but also prepares students for tournaments.*

Obviously, the AUCA Chess Club would not have been possible without the support of the Academic Advising Center, which actively encourages student initiatives. From the very beginning, the club received organizational guidance and resourceful assistance that allowed it to move beyond an informal gathering of enthusiasts. This support made it possible to secure a regular space for meetings, coordinate schedules, and plan events in a structured way. Most importantly, it created an environment in which students felt comfortable. The office's involvement helped transform the club into a sustainable part of university life rather than a short-lived initiative. Thanks to this collaboration, the AUCA Chess club has been able to grow steadily and set ambitious goals for the future. The Academic Advising Center is a great example of how help and support can assist students realize their ideas. At AUCA, full of lectures, exams, and assignments, our chess club provides a unique experience that serves as a mental training ground. As great chess players say, sometimes, one move can change more than the game.

**Aktan Toichubekov**  
ICP-125

AUCA Quiz Club is a relatively new initiative, started in Fall 2025 by Nurmukhamed Abdumomun uulu (AMI-124), and later accompanied by co-organizers Bektemir Doronbekov, Mukhammedrasul Saftarifor, and Shirin Abdyrakhmanova. Our story shows how curiosity, competition, and institutional support create a thriving student initiative, beginning from a small game between friends and becoming one of the most dynamic clubs at AUCA.

Many AUCA students enjoy quizzes and trivia, yet there was no dedicated space for them to engage in a consistent and organized way. We envisioned a platform that would challenge students intellectually, encourage learning beyond the classroom, and bring together people who value knowledge and do not mind friendly competition. This vision, however, required more than enthusiasm. It required structure, resources, and guidance. From the beginning of our initiation, the Academic Advising Center (AAC) became crucial in turning this initiation into reality. The Center provided financial support, giving students meaningful and motivating awards. Advising Team's support increased student engagement and helped us establish a high standard for the quality and organization of our events from the outset.

Throughout the fall semester, we conducted three playoffs, one pre-final tournament, and one grand final tournament, steadily increasing our momentum and attracting more and more people willing to participate. We experimented with different quiz formats, including Jeopardy, head-to-head, and team-to-team playoffs. Each format brought a unique energy and challenge, helping us learn what worked best for our community.

By the time we reached the grand final tournament, we combined the best elements of each format into a balanced structure across three rounds. We ensured that both excitement and fairness were present in the grand final competition. At the start, we set an ambitious goal of registering 54 students and forming 18 teams in total. However, this success became our first serious challenge. We had to prepare 225 unique questions for one playoff. This workload became colossal for a team of two members. We understood one critical and important rule from this experience: **a scale must not harm quality**. After analyzing what we had gone through, we concluded that the optimal format for future competitions would be 12 teams, which we think is a golden ratio and will allow us to ensure a smooth and manageable process, while preserving the dynamics and best quality of the playoffs and final tournaments.

The AUCA Quiz Club's success highlights how the Academic Advising Center supports student initiatives while providing essential guidance, technical resources, and infrastructure that help students realize their visions and develop lasting contributions that enhance AUCA campus life.

**Nurmukhamed Abdumomun uulu**  
AMI-124



# “EVERYONE \* NEEDS FRIENDS!”



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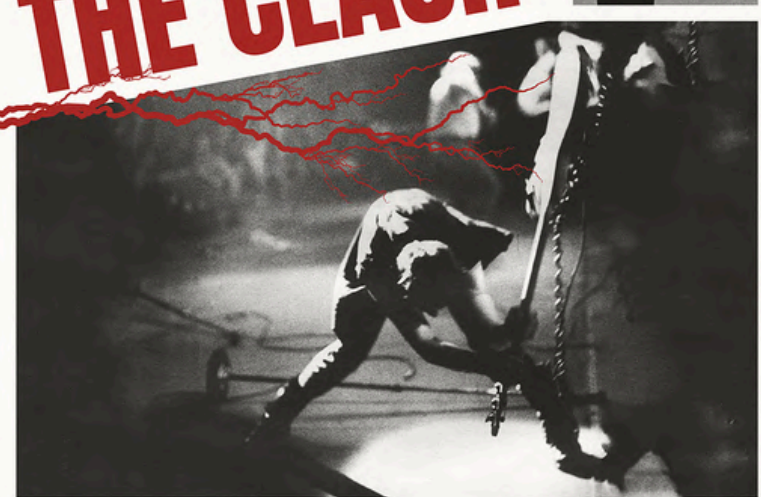
During my involvement in the virtual exchange program between the universities of Warwick and AUCA, it occurred to me that before, I had no idea about what friendship was. Now I can confidently tell you that friendship is a mutual and unspoken decision of two people who, one day, chose to sincerely respect and support each other. This decision doesn't even depend on the distance or birthplace. It straightly comes from the heart. Such precious lessons and new acquaintances this experience of mine gave me!

This program is announced each year by our International Student Office in coordination with Warwick University, England. It's aimed at practicing Russian and English for the students of both universities. This year it started in November and lasted till January. My partner from England was Patrick, who studied law there, just like I do at AUCA. He is learning Russian at Warwick, which is particularly remarkable as a strong school of Modern Languages and Cultures. During our weekly meetings, we had engaging conversations on the topics of our shared interests. We would always easily and naturally come up with the topics to talk about. I truly enjoyed our dialogues - besides practicing the languages, we both learned a lot about the cultural differences of the UK and Kyrgyzstan. As we grew closer together, Patrick and I realized our common passion for music, especially rock.

By the end of the program, participants were supposed to come up with ideas for their collaborative projects and finally present them. Accordingly, we stopped by the idea of making a video where we would talk about the legacy of British and Russian rock. I chose to focus on the famous British punk-rock band The Clash, while Patrick talked about the legendary Russian rock band Kino. We did a great job working on that project, and it got to be quite a good video... in fact, better to see it yourself by clicking [HERE!](#) We still keep in touch even after the completion of the program. I most affectionately value our friendship; it means a lot to me. I'll once again say it - everyone needs friends!



## THE CLASH



Atai Bakirov  
IBL-125





# TSI Student Story



I am a freshman at TSI AUCA. I have been studying here for one semester, and I already have a lot to share. Before coming to TSI, I thought studying here would be too difficult for me. I expected the program to be very challenging, and in some ways, I was right. Life in TSI is not easy, but it is interesting and motivating. During the first weeks, everything felt new and exciting. I tried to take part in different activities and get to know new people. I would advise future students to make as many friends as possible, because friends really help you adapt to a new place and a new system. Studying in college is harder than in school. There are many deadlines, projects, and tasks, so time management becomes very important.

One thing I really like about TSI is the way teachers teach. They use different methods and try to make lessons interesting. This makes studying more engaging. The hardest part of the semester is exams. We have three exams in one semester, and it felt like exams never ended. I studied a lot, slept very little, and felt stressed because I was not used to such pressure. However, all the effort paid off, and I passed all my exams successfully with a high GPA. At the beginning of the semester, I set a goal to get into the top 20 students in the college. I do not want to rush conclusions, but I am proud of myself because I may have achieved this goal. Some people think that AUCA students only study all the time, but that is not true.

There are many clubs and activities in TSI. I joined the Dance Club, the Charity Club, and the Hiking Club. For example, in the Dance Club, we prepared for initiation for more than a month, and it was a great experience. In the Hiking Club, we go to the mountains, visit different places, and see waterfalls and beautiful nature. In the Charity Club, we organize charity fairs and other events to help people. Being a TSI student means learning how to balance studying, activities, and personal life. In my opinion, choosing this college was one of the best decisions I have made. Being part of the TSI family gives you many opportunities to grow, meet new people, and discover yourself.

**Bazhanov Dauren**  
**ES-1-25**



# Behind The Closed Doors: A Look Inside Dormitory Life



What is it really like to live in a university dormitory? Is it constant noise and lack of privacy, or a place where lifelong friendships are formed? First of all, a dormitory is not just a place where you live - it is a place where you experience many things for the first time. The first time you cook without your mother's help, the first time you celebrate your birthday without your parents, and, surprisingly, the first time you miss the cleaning routine that you used to hate at home. The feelings that students have for the dormitory are complex as well: at first, you do not want to go there because it reminds you of your home that you have left behind in order to achieve your goals. However, time passes, and you realize that this place attracts you more and more, but you cannot say why. Is it because of people who became close to you or the space that you have organized yourself to get rest after university life pressure? Since there is no exact answer to all these questions, it would be totally unfair not to ask some of the newcomers and the long-term residents about their experience at the dormitory and what makes this place unique for them.

## **Alidina Karageneyeva, AMI-125:**

*"Dormitory life has helped me with communication skills. During the months I have been living in the dormitory, I understood that dormitories are always a good opportunity for students to achieve social interactions, which reflects strong relationships with peers. The hardest part of living in a dorm is probably the noise at night. I'm a really light sleeper, so it can be tough sometimes to deal with the loud sounds. However, when I ask my dormmates to keep it down, they usually understand, and it works out, which I am very grateful for. The most memorable memory that perfectly represents dormitory life is when, on the very first days, actually during the Orientation Program period, my roommates, new friends, and I cooked palov together. This moment has such a special meaning to me because it was filled with joy and happiness. All I was thinking about was that even though we are from different places and countries, our way became common in AUCA, and I was grateful and happy. Gradually, life in the dormitory has changed my understanding of independence and responsibility. I now realize that being independent means not only taking care of myself but also being responsible toward others I live with, from respecting shared spaces to managing my own schedule and decisions."*

## **Taygunova Begim, FHT 1-23:**

*"A day in the dormitory usually begins with the sound of alarms and everyone rushing off in different directions. During the day, we are absorbed in our studies, and even at lunchtime, everyone is busy with their own classes and schedules. Later in the evening, we have dinner, share stories, laugh, and talk with our roommates before going to sleep. I spend most of my time in my room. Sometimes, though, my friends and I go downstairs to play UNO or just enjoy doing something together. The room in the basement was recently renovated and has become even more cozy - a perfect place to sit back, relax, and spend time with friends. Still, my favorite place of all remains my room, where I feel most comfortable. For me, the most memorable moments are the times we had fun together at dorm parties, shared heartfelt conversations before falling asleep, went to the store in the evenings, and laughed at absolutely everything. These moments with the best people from the dorm will stay in my heart forever, and I will never forget them. I will also never forget how my wonderful and kind roommate often sets her alarm for 7 a.m. just to wake me up so I don't oversleep - a small act of care that means so much to me."*

Despite some inconveniences, life at the dormitory remains unique because it connects not only people but their stories and connections, which matter a lot. Hopefully, all international students at AUCA, regardless of whether they stay in a dormitory or not, will find a place that they can call home while being far from their loved ones.

**Saranjomova Farah**  
**LAS-125**





# CHIY SOGUU: At the Intersection of Art, Ecology, and Culture

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“Chiy” is a traditional technique for weaving mats from wild local reeds, one of the most ancient and fragile skills of the Kyrgyz people. For centuries, “chiy” served as the basis for yurt (nomad house) construction, providing insulation, protection, and comfort. However, today this craft is rapidly disappearing: modern synthetic materials are replacing natural ones, and the chiy bushes themselves are disappearing under the pressure of construction, land use changes, and climatic processes. Chiy was and remains a unique form of decorative and applied art. Craftswomen created patterned mats called “chymagan chiy” by weaving dyed wool into them and forming geometric patterns: shaped curls, rhombuses, squares, and polygons. Each pattern carries a visual memory of space, the rhythms of nature, and the aesthetics of nomadic culture. Working with chiy is very laborious: the collected chiy straws must be cleaned, sorted, woven with colored wool, and joined on simple looms into long canvases. These mats were used to insulate yurts’ wooden walls (kerege), being an additional wall screen between the felt covering and wooden lattices, also as beautiful panno-like door curtains (eshik chiy), and also in everyday life, for drying food and storage, and for making felt in general.



Chiy is not only a craft, but also part of the local ecological knowledge system. Growing on high-altitude plains, especially on the shores of Issyk-Kul, chiy has served as a natural soil stabilizer for centuries. Its root system retains moisture, strengthens slopes, reduces the risk of landslides and mudflows, and supports the stability of mountain ecosystems. Today, the places where chiy grow are shrinking due to the construction of guest houses, tourist infrastructure, and changes in land use. Local ecological observations show that the disappearance of chiy, combined with accelerating glacier melt, is exacerbating soil degradation in the most vulnerable regions of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the disappearance of the craft means not only a cultural loss, but also an ecological one - the loss of knowledge about careful, sustainable interaction with the mountain landscape.

Today, the holders of “chiy soguu” knowledge are mainly elderly women from rural regions of Kyrgyzstan. They are the keepers of knowledge about the selection of reeds, the right time and method of harvesting them, the preparation of raw materials, weaving techniques, artistic styles, and the transfer of skills to younger generations. As they pass away, so does a unique system of skills, observations, and meanings that have been passed down through generations. This PREF project approaches chiy as a phenomenon at the intersection of art, ecology, and culture. Its goal is to document disappearing knowledge, record techniques and visual traditions, study the ecological role of chiy, and bring attention back to material culture associated with sustainability and natural wisdom.

Cholpon Kuskakbaeva  
MAANTH-123



## AUCA Students at the *UNI* Model United Nations Conference in Almaty

From January 9 to 11, 2026, students of the American University of Central Asia took part in the UNI Model United Nations Conference held at Caspian University in Almaty, Kazakhstan, upon the university’s invitation. On January 10th, 2026, three of our Student Senators, Artur Kim, Renata Maria Gradval, and Saadat Dzholdosheva, actively represented AUCA alongside fellow students from the IBL and ICP departments. Together, they explored a wide range of contemporary political and legal issues by participating in committees conducted in both English and Russian.

AUCA students contributed confidently across several committees, including the UN Security Council, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the UN Economic and Financial Affairs Council, the Model African Union, and the Model Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. By applying their strong academic background in the social sciences and their passion for justice and peace, they demonstrated professionalism in debates, presentations, and negotiations. The conference offered a valuable opportunity to strengthen skills in diplomacy, public speaking, teamwork, and negotiation. Representing AUCA with dedication and commitment, the students showed excellent performance, with Aidana Zamirova and Margarita Lulakova receiving special nominations in recognition of their outstanding participation in their respective committees.

Student Senate



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