

ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 30, 2026



TEN DAYS IN
PRAGUE

PAGE 2



HALLOWEEN
MEMORIES

PAGE 3



MY FIRST
MONTH IN
ASIA

PAGE 4



Ten Days in PRAGUE



2

This summer, I had the opportunity to spend ten unforgettable days in Prague, Czech Republic, and participate in the TFAS EJI program.

As a JMC student, I had heard about this program before because students from our department have participated in EJI in previous years. This summer, I was selected to take part, and I was incredibly excited. It was a chance not only to study journalism in Europe, but also to meet journalists from different parts of the world and experience one of the most beautiful cities I have ever visited.

The European Journalism Institute took place from July 18 to 25 and brought together 32 participants from 13 countries. The program was organized by The Fund for American Studies in partnership with The Media Project and Anglo-American University in Prague.

During the week, we attended lectures and workshops on photojournalism, digital storytelling, feature writing, media ethics, religion reporting and religious freedom. Our professors included Adam Berry from Getty Images, Melissa Harrison from Southern Methodist University, Paul Marshall from Baylor University and the Religious Freedom Institute, and David Rocks from Bloomberg News. We also met guest speakers who shared their professional experiences and gave us practical advice about working in journalism.

One thing that made the experience especially interesting for me was the diversity of the group. Sitora Serzhan and I were among the few undergraduate students in the program, while many other participants had already completed their master's degrees or PhDs, and some had extensive professional experience. At first, this felt a little intimidating, but I quickly realized that my own experience in journalism helped me participate in discussions, exchange ideas and work confidently with the group.

A major part of the program was creating our own multimedia journalism project. Together with Sitora, I worked on a multimedia project called "Behind the Church Doors," which explored what churches mean to people today.

Our original task was to conduct only a few interviews. At first, we were nervous about approaching strangers. But once we started, we somehow could not stop. In the end, we interviewed nine people from different countries and backgrounds. Our final project combined interviews, photography, data and a short video report. For me, this project was one of the most memorable parts of EJI because it helped me become more confident when approaching people, asking questions and working outside my comfort zone.

Studying at Anglo-American University also gave us the perfect location to explore Prague. After classes, we could walk to places such as Charles Bridge, the Lennon Wall, churches and many other historic parts of the city. I especially loved simply taking the tram, looking out the window and enjoying the atmosphere of Prague. It is one of those cities that makes you want to come back again and again....



I still remember my first time celebrating Halloween

3

It was autumn of 2013 when it happened, if I recall correctly. I used to live in Brussels, Belgium, back then, where everything was so different from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. That city gave me so many fond memories that I still find myself reminiscing about, despite the eternally grey, cloudy sky and antique streets, darkened by erosion and age. Not only did Brussels cradle me in its warmth, but it also gave me the opportunity to experience celebrations that are not as common here in Kyrgyzstan, or at least not celebrated as grandly: Christmas, Easter, and many other Christian festivities that, despite being an atheist, I had the privilege of enjoying during my childhood.

Even though Halloween has roots in pre-Christian traditions, it too has become a celebration I'm still glad to have experienced in my early years. Even if I didn't fully understand the celebration at first due to my young age, being part of the experience still drew me into this amazing and spooky tradition.

Cutting out orange and black paper to make bright wall ornaments; watching and giggling as my classmates' faces were painted by our teachers; struggling to choose what costume I'd like to wear to the school party; gasping in amazement at the enormous quantities of pastries brought by our parents all these precious moments of bonding and working passionately together for a beloved celebration are memories I still treasure.

Once the preparations were complete, my classmates and I began the party. We did so many wonderful things together: bobbing for apples, carving pumpkins and turning them into jack-o'-lanterns, chasing and scaring each other with masks of famous horror characters, and, of course, going trick-or-treating together in the neighborhoods near our school. Despite my inexperience with these activities and my general shyness at the time, little me still kept going and participating with my friends in spreading the spirit of Halloween to everyone who crossed our paths.

Over time, we grew tired of running from door to door and decided to return to our school just in time for the real party to begin. All the pastries had been laid out in front of us, with all the handmade ornaments hanging above our heads like stars in the night sky. Since we were so short as kids, seeing all these completed preparations from our perspective made the party that followed seem even more grandiose.

That's when the disco ball turned on, and neon purple light flooded the room, painting the darkness with its glow. The atmosphere suddenly turned electric, shifting from warm coziness to the wild excitement of children who may or may not have had too much sugar in their stomachs. Something in me made my vision clearer despite the murky lighting and gave me a heightened awareness of my surroundings; perhaps it was the effect of surprise or an overwhelming feeling of joy that little me didn't yet comprehend. Whatever it was, it froze that moment forever in my mind and filled me with even more excitement to dance that Halloween night away.

Even after moving from Belgium back to Kyrgyzstan, that mind-blowing feeling, the ecstatic realization of what I was truly experiencing still remains in my heart to this day.

One day, on another Halloween, I hope to experience that beautiful emotion again.

Aibike Ermek
TCMA-126

H A L L O W E E N

My First Month in Asia

One year ago, I had no idea, or even a semblance of an idea, that I would be here at the American University of Central Asia. Yet, here I am.

Since I was a child, I had always wanted to visit Central Asia one day. After scrolling through photos of the alpine lakes of Kazakhstan and rooting for the then-competing Central Asian figure skater Elizaveta Tursynbaeva, I resolved that one day I would visit the region. I never thought that I would be living here full-time. But on September 7th, I arrived at Manas International Airport. After 16 hours of flying with a 13-hour layover in Istanbul, it had finally sunk in: I had finally made it after 10 months of official planning and almost a decade of dreaming.

In my first month here, I turned 22, travelled to Son-Kul, celebrated another exchange student's birthday over homemade cakes at their homestay, and fulfilled my nearly decade-long goal of seeing figure skater Alexandra Trusova, a 2022 Olympic medalist, live. I also now train in figure skating here in Bishkek under two coaches who are members of the Kyrgyz national figure skating team. Now, I even have an O!Bank account and have learned to love the QR payment system here, although it proved baffling at first.

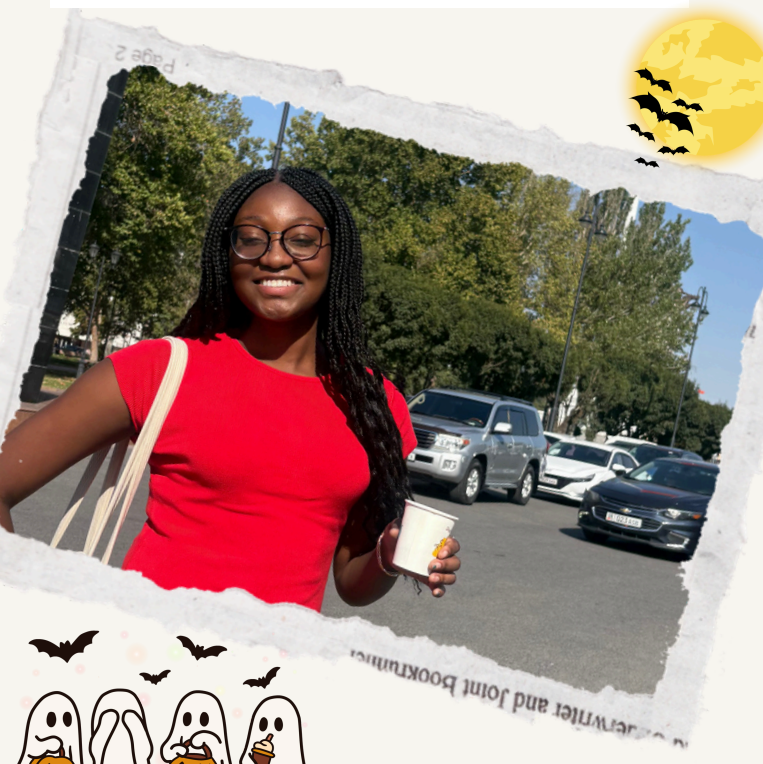


I've also been living in the dorms here. One of the first things that my roommate showed me was a stellar pair of stilettos she had been bedazzling with red jewels since May. I couldn't help but be drawn to their shine and the evident love she put into making them. A few weeks later, I found myself surrounded by hallmates at a table near the kitchen in the basement, laughing about the life experiences we had all lived through that led us all — whether from Afghanistan, America, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, or the United Arab Emirates — to find laughter together in a basement kitchen in Bishkek over Fanta and spaghetti. In the United States, such a dorm experience is hard to find. Many students isolate themselves, tend not to share resources, and forget to focus on the connections with neighbors in their living community. At my school in the United States, an extreme desire for prestige and success triumphs over genuine connection. For me, my life at AUCA is the direct opposite of that attitude. Here, I feel connected to and trusting of the people around me for the first time in a long time.

In the spring, I will return to my home institution to complete the last semester of my undergraduate studies. There, I hope to bring the lessons I've learned here back home: prioritizing community in all aspects of life and finding joy in the little moments. I'll miss running as fast as possible on Tuesday nights to buy raspberries from the older women at the corner, practicing elementary Russian at the AUCA Coffeemia and countless Kulikov locations, and last-minute Globus runs on the walk back from AUCA. But for now, I am left to live in the moment: enjoying my daily life here in Kyrgyzstan, fulfilling a nearly decade-long dream of visiting Central Asia.

Jasmine N. Wynn

Exchange Student



TO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

As the new semester has emerged, students, especially freshmen, may face different challenges during their studies. This can start with a basic struggle regarding assignments and schedule and end up with mental health concerns that prevent our students from enjoying their university life. Therefore, let's introduce the new-comers to the student support services that AUCA has and remind others as well where they can go in case of emergency.

Writing and Academic Resources Centre (WARC)



This is the place where students get support from their peers in such subjects like writing, mathematics, programming, accounting, economics, finance, and help in improving English and Russian languages. Students can book a session, both offline and online, and get help from their older peers in the topics that cause struggles to them. The WARC office is located in room 228 and sessions can be booked through the website warc.auca.kg



Academic Advising Centre

Provides support for students by helping them to make their schedule for the upcoming semester. Peer advisors not only make a ready schedule for students but also help them to understand which requirements of General Education Program or Major Courses they have covered and which ones they have to take now. In addition to that, the Academic Advising Office organizes workshops for students on improving their skills and study habits by inviting professors from different departments. Also annually it organizes the Family Advising Day for parents of the freshmen to introduce them to the AUCA system. The Academic Advising Centre is located in room 209 where students can come and ask their questions.

International Students Office (ISO)

Serves as the main source of support for international and exchange students at AUCA. Besides registration and visa, it also provides guidance on cultural adaptation and social integration of students. Also it is a place where students, whether they are local or international, can get information regarding opportunities to study abroad and AUCA's partner universities. If students have questions, they can always address them in room 221 where the International Students Office is located.



Psychological Counselling Service

One of the factors that helps students to succeed during their studies is mental health, so it is important not to keep all the struggles by yourself but refer to someone in order to resolve them. Students can book individual consultations at Psychological Counselling Service to discuss their problems that occurred on the ground of academic pressure or other personal reasons. Moreover, during the midterms and finals. This centre organizes workshops on preserving mental health during exam weeks where students can attend with their friends and find ways to avoid burnout. You can book a consultation by visiting the website counseling.auca.kg



Library

Students can get textbooks or any other books of their own preference and return them till the end of the semester. AUCA Library has access to various databases, except for the physical copies of books, so students can use them, while looking for works to cite and references in their thesis or other courses. Library organizes workshops for seniors on how to use effectively those resources what makes the process of writing easier in some terms.



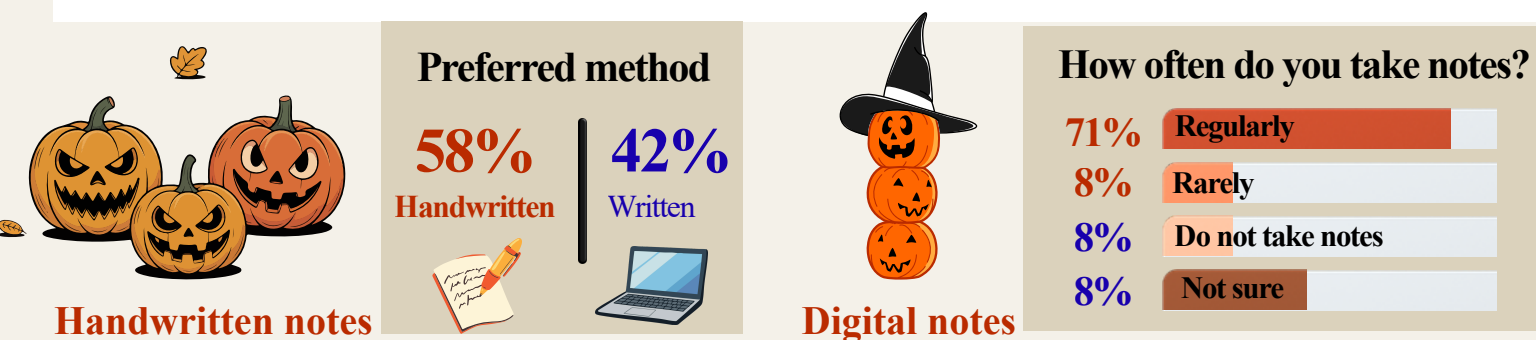
Despite the mentioned support services, there are also different initiatives and guest lectures organized by Departments, Alumni and Development Offices, and Offices of Vice-President and President, so we highly encourage you to check your student emails in order to not miss the upcoming opportunities and events.

Evolution of Note-Taking:

From Traditional hand note-taking to Modern Digital Software apps.

“Note taking constitutes a central but often hidden phase in the transmission of knowledge,” writes Ann Blair in *Note Taking as an Art of Transmission*. Today, note-taking continues to play an important role, but the methods have changed. With the growth of technology, students and professors can now choose between traditional handwritten notes and digital note-taking apps.

To understand how people at AUCA approach note-taking, I conducted a small survey among students and professors. More than 20 participants shared their opinions. The results showed that 58% prefer handwritten notes, while 42% prefer digital note-taking. In addition, 71% said they regularly take notes, while smaller percentages said they rarely take notes, do not take notes, or are unsure.



Handwritten notes remain popular for several reasons. Many participants said that writing by hand helps them memorize information better and improves concentration. Some also mentioned that it allows more freedom, creativity, and personal control over their notes. At the same time, handwritten notes can become messy, especially during fast-paced lectures. One student explained that because of quick writing, they sometimes cannot understand their own handwriting later.

Digital note-taking also has clear advantages. It is convenient, fast, and easy to access. Mr. Khiradmand, instructor at NGA and coordinator at WARC, says: “Digital note-taking (laptop) is convenient and you can keep all the notes in one place and it is easier to search for the info whenever you need them.” Students also noted that digital notes save time, especially when professors move quickly through slides. Another benefit is accessibility: even if you forget one device, your notes may still be available on another.

Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. Handwritten notes may support memory and deeper engagement, while digital notes are faster and more practical. The survey shows that there is no single perfect method for everyone. In the end, the best approach depends on personal preference, learning style, and situation.

Isroilzhon Ismailov
LAS-125