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HAPPY NOORUZ!



photo taken from wikipedia

How the dance
floor took...
page 2



From Unknown
to Adoration...
page 4



AUCA Student
Senate's...
page 9



How the dance floor took Erdan to the America's Got Talent Show

A Nike hoodie, Air Jordan boots, glasses, a cap that's turned back, and oversized jeans – these are the things that could accurately describe 22-year-old Erdan. He has cultivated a passion for robot dancing and bone breaking. But who would imagine that the passion of a boy from geographically-small Bishkek would take him all the way to the America's Got Talent show?

As a 7-year-old kid who started watching Step Up, Erdan used to imitate the movements of the actors from the movie. This is how he started to get into hip hop dancing. His passion significantly influenced his personality. "I was a very naughty and capricious kid who always wanted to be free," says Erdan. He was a free-spirited boy, noticeable for his mastery of parkour, running, jumping, and climbing atop shipping containers and natural landscapes.

As a kid, Erdan practiced dance moves all day after watching dance shows. His journey took a significant turn when he crossed paths with the popular dancer, Atai Omurzakov, whose influence guided Erdan's journey in the world of dance. "I filmed the way I'm dancing and sent it to Atai Omurzakov. I was his huge fan. I was shocked when he invited me to talk with him. And this was the time when everything started," he says. Becoming Omurzakov's student, Erdan showcased his talents on global stages like America's Got Talent and Asia's Got



Talent in Singapore. The America's Got Talent show was one of the most important performances in his life. He clearly remembers himself on the stage. "Soon it was our turn to perform. So many people. I was super nervous and stressed. That's why I kept going to the bathroom quite a lot," he laughs. This journey opened new doors for him and inspired him to perform more and more. Dancing gave him a lot of opportunities, especially when it comes to traveling. Erdan used to be a fan of the Head and Tails (Орел и Решка) programs about traveling. His dream country to visit was Singapore. He and his team came to perform at Asia's Got Talent show.

It was night, December 9, 2021. He was coming from the Singapore Changi Airport and drove downtown. "It was amazing. I felt like I'm in the movie Avatar. The Supertrees, Cloud Forest, and Flower Dome plants glowing green, blue, and purple. I've never seen one before," Erdan says.

The dancer, Erdan, faced numerous challenges, including injuries and conflicts with team members. One tough period was when his team disbanded due to conflicts, forcing him to decide the fate of his passion. He chose to continue his career with his teacher leaving his team. Besides, he had a major injury when he had to fly to the Czech Republic to participate in Cesko Slovensko ma Talent. "I was playing

football before the flight and dislocated my arm. I had to fly to the contest with a cast. The doctor told me to wear it for 10-15 days but I had to take it off on the plane after 19 hours. It was very painful. I couldn't move my hands, they were swollen," laughs Erdan.

Throughout his career, Erdan's appearance underwent a captivating evolution. From his stubborn phase with long hair, ripped jeans, fake earrings, chains, and piercings, he transformed into a street-style icon. Nowadays, he rockshoodies, glasses, and caps. "You rarely see me in classic clothes. I feel comfortable when I wear street style," he says. Erdan has an arrow on his head, like Benzema, the football player. Dancing still takes him to places.

Now Erdan studies at one of the best universities in Central Asia, at the American University of Central Asia, with a 100% discount. He won the Stream competition where he was able to show

the student theater “Mirrors” where he actively participates. Now Erdan wants to focus more on his education. He was an excellent student from elementary to high school. “I devoted enough time to my passion. Now I want to focus more on my studies. I have lots of plans related to business and want to develop myself spiritually. However, I cannot tell in detail,” he says.



JMC-120
Amanda Kadyrbekova

Sending the message of God through Music

I want to write about music. Honestly, perhaps words cannot adequately convey my feelings and thoughts about music. Nonetheless, I am writing from my own perception, which you may consider as the perspective of an ordinary person on music. I listen to various songs from different countries. I don't have a particular interest in a specific type of music; rather, I tend to enjoy whatever is popular at the moment. Sometimes, I listen to songs to distract myself from the hardships of daily life or to escape from my assigned tasks and responsibilities. Regardless of the reason, listening to music motivates me and helps me forget the challenges of life, transporting me to the tranquil mindset of a free shepherd or a carefree driver in the lush landscapes of the Helmand province in Afghanistan, where concerns about life and the future seem distant. Indeed, at times, music ignites my imagination, leading me to envision beautiful villages, verdant hills, and towering mountains, accompanied by someone I hold dear, someone kind and elegant, someone with a gentle smile. It's quite possible that the songs I listen to on YouTube lack purity, and I hadn't had the opportunity to experience a live music performance; until January 24, 2024, when I attended a live orchestra performance at the Philharmonic in Bishkek city, Kyrgyzstan. There, about 16-17 talented musicians performed Vivaldi's «Four Seasons» with their instruments. Here is what I felt and what I reflected upon as I listened to the live performance:

«Farhad, just this once, please forget about your past, your losses, and your achievements. Forget the daily grind for a moment. Don't dwell on the future. Just close your eyes, take a deep breath, and let your soul

surrender to the melodies of the music.»

As the group began playing, it's impossible to convey in words the creativity, harmony, and emotional impact of their performance. «I followed the sounds; it began with a single note, low in pitch. One note multiplied into two, then three, and more, the pitch rising and then gracefully descending.» It was reminiscent of life itself, starting

from nothing, evolving into something, and eventually fading away as if it had never existed. When the performance concluded, I experienced a profound sense of tranquility that I had never felt before. There was a perfect harmony between my soul and mind. I felt as though I loved everyone and everything around me. Everything appeared beautiful, everyone seemed lovely, and I felt loved. The world, the people, and even God felt lovely. Reflecting on this experience, I realize that there are moments, emotions, and situations in life that defy verbal expression. This is why music exists – to creatively articulate those ineffable aspects of existence. Words fail to convey the love of God for humanity, the love of a mother for her child, or the love of a father for his child. In contrast, I believe that music is the voice of God, urging us to contemplate creativity, harmony, beauty, change, boundlessness, love, and life in this world.



image taken from wikipedia

Farhad Ehsani
MA-ANTH

From Unknown to Adoration: American girl discovers Kyrgyzstan and learns the Russian language



Travel with Anne, whose visit to Kyrgyzstan became a roller coaster of cultural shocks and must-remember events. 19-year-old Anne Foote is from the state of Virginia, US. At first glance, she seemed to me a shy and introverted person, but after our first conversation, Anne's smile and captivating stories revealed positive energy which presented her as an open, friendly, and interesting person. Two summers ago, Anne spent 8 weeks in Kyrgyzstan, observing its scenery and studying Russian via the National Security Language Initiative for Youth program, which sends high school and recently graduated students to diverse countries to learn various languages. Anne had never heard about Kyrgyzstan before the program, but she decided to choose to explore the unknown. She had learned about Mongolia at school, finding similarities with Kyrgyzstan in the (past) nomadic lifestyle and the culture of hospitality.

First visit to Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2022

Anne's favorite memory from her first visit to Kyrgyzstan is a trip to Issyk-Kul: a starry sky, warmth from the fire, cheerful friends, and the murmur of the lake. Bishkek seemed simultaneously both calm and fun, which made it special for her. One of the cultural shocks for Anne was the people's attitude towards personal space. The proximity on the road and in public spaces can feel extremely unpleasant to foreigners, even for extroverts.

"Some people in the city are so open that they can randomly start talking to me in English and asking questions," she added. She laughingly recalls situations when a lack of Russian embarrassed her: «When my host mom asked if I was a wife, I said yes because I thought she was asking if I was a girl."

Anne came back to continue her studies in Kyrgyzstan

However, Anne loved Kyrgyzstan's incredible landscapes, interesting culture, and the unforgettable emotions from her first trip so much that she returned. "I wanted to apply to the program again the whole year, and was happy when I was accepted," she cheerfully said.

She came to Bishkek in August of 2023, and will live here till May of 2024. Anne wanted to continue improving her Russian Language skills. Her second visit is more challenging, and Anne feels homesick because the period of her stay changed from 8 weeks to 9 months. "The more a person is in another country, the more challenges one faces," she shares. However, her friends, studies, and happy moments help to take her mind off the home she misses.

Living with the Kyrgyz host family for 9 months

Anne has been living with her host family since August 2023. Anne is happy she lives next to AUCA, so she can walk to it. Despite the cultural contrasts, she could not stop smiling when talking about her family, especially her younger host siblings. "Having kids in the family is good because they are breaking the ice, making the connection easier and closer." Anne has 4 host siblings; her host sister is 15, and her host brothers are 3, 7, and 12 years old. Her main household chore is cleaning her room. "Sometimes I feel awkward because they always politely decline my help to clean the other rooms," she said. Anne finds joy in knowing that even though her host relatives do not live nearby, they are still close: she sees her host grandparents every week, while in the US she sees her real grandparents once a year. The program obligates the host family to speak to Anne in Russian to make the study's result more effective. A thing that Anne does not understand is the frequent cleaning. "I am always surprised by my host sister's answer to the question of "What will you do?" since the answer is most often the same – cleaning."

Studying and learning Russian at AUCA

Thinking about AUCA, Anne immediately talked about her teacher of Russian, Altynai. Anne enthusiastically spoke about the study process, "Altynai makes us study and have fun at the same time." Anne and her group explore Kyrgyz culture, studying Manas and the geography of Kyrgyzstan alongside Russian grammar. Moreover, our joyful traveler investigates the culture through komuz classes at AUCA. "I think that AUCA has great conditions for studying and enjoying university life," she added. The Russian language became important for Anne because she wants to work in the international relations sphere, and this skill is going to help advance her career.

Anne promised to come back

Anne fondly remembers her first days in Kyrgyzstan, which started with the funny situation in a "marshrutka." "I was falling everywhere, and my host mom grabbed and pushed me to the chair," she said. However, life outside the city and admiration of nature's beauty are Anne's favorite memories about Kyrgyzstan. "When you are in the mountains, life feels so easy," she mentioned. Anne is going to study at a university in Scotland in the fall, but she promises to come back and see more of the magnificent places. "Everyone should come to Kyrgyzstan, especially Americans, because coming here and seeing how other people live changes your perception of life and expands your horizons."

Танец между Любовью и Безразличием
Она была из тех, кто сердцем умела любить

Он был тем, у кого сердца не имелось.
Исходу встречи двух таких людей бывает
лишь гроза,
разбитая ваза, несказанные слова.

И сколько бы не старалась передать ту
боль,

Никто не сможет описать ту муку,
что сердце разрывала в бурную разлуку
И как бы не верила, не искала, девочка в
глазах любви

По другую сторону лишь видела тёмные
зеркала души

На протяжении годов, двух- трёх, она старалась,
верила, молилась

Она кричала о своей любви,

В ответ ждала, что её тоже любят, но по-

лучала лишь: «Я такой, увы прости»

Вы думаете, как глупа та девочка была

А я бы вам сказала, нет друзья!

Та девочка лишь сердцем выбирала

Не слушая чужие голоса

И как бы сильно больно не бывало

Ему она всю боль свою прощала.

Но он, не осознавая всех своих ошибок

При каждой ссоре сердце разбивал.

И каждый раз сердце своё по кусочкам
собирая

Спрашивала, разве это и есть любовь?

А может её и вовсе нету

Но снова с болью себя убеждала,

Что любовь она такая,

Она жестока и бездушна

Она слепа и равнодушна

Заставив голову молчать

И только сердцем выбирать.

Спустя долгое время,
я снова сижу и посвящаю тебе строки. Месяц февраль для нас с тобой всегда был каким-то особенным, наполненным теплом и любовью. Я часто задумывалась, может, потому что в этом месяце отмечают праздник Святого Валентина, но ты в шутку говорил, что праздник был создан в этом месяце, лишь исключительно для нас. Я каждый раз смеялась, но в сердце верила, что так и есть. Так вот, мой дурачок, даже если тебя уже нет рядом, я каждый день встаю с молитвой о тебе. Сегодня, вспоминая наш первый день, наш первый разговор, с улыбкой на устах и сердцем плача. Я снова говорю, что скучаю по тебе. Мне все твердили, мол любить ты не умел, что я такая дура, что жизнь

трачу на тебя и всё себе испорчу. Но я-то знала, как умел любить ты, как мило ты смотрел и нежно обнимал. Счастливые моменты вместе, где я себя как дома ощущала, ведь ты был самым добрым и надежным, и собою от всех бед меня укрывал. Они не слышали всех наших разговоров и ласковых и милых слов, но даже если ты для них был без сердца, а я-то знала, как любить ты можешь. Мы были счастливы, но жизнь сыграла злую шутку. Любили ли мы? Я очень сильно, и ты, конечно, да. Так почему исход наш такой грустный, для этого мне потребуется написать тома. Но в этот прекрасный праздник. Я всех влюбленных призываю: любите и цените друг друга. И как бы плохо ни было в ссорах,

поверьте, любя в разлуке находить хуже. Прекрасный праздник День Святого Валентина был создан исключительно для тех, кто любит полным сердцем, готовые посвятить друг другу жизнь. Он напоминает нам о любви, которая так важна в жизни, о тех, кто рядом с нами стоит и каждый день нас снова выбирает. Так вот, давайте не забывать о самых любимых и ценить их, пока они рядом. Посвятите этот день друг другу и отпразднуйте настоящую силу и красоту вашей любви, которая преодолевает все преграды и наполняет жизнь смыслом и радостью.

Посвящаю эти строчки в этом году опять тебе, А.

Samira Imomdodova

His favorite chocolate was round and cute; with peanuts embedded, and stacked with gold sheets. I loved splitting it in half with my front teeth, and he loved eating it all at once.

With a short letter, in the hope that the sweetness of chocolate would be the consolation of his tired day, I bought a box of his favorite chocolates on Valentine's Day, and always put them on his desk.

Chocolate is delivered a lot when expressing love. Love is not sweet, but

chocolate that expresses love is sweet.

In many cases, love is left with only blurred traces, and when we express love, the shape of a heart that we draw crudely is filled with deep red.

Love is usually not eternal, but our little lips touch our ears sweetly with love covenants that seem to be eternal.

There is no chocolate on his desk and on mine today, no joke letters mixed with pranks that only the two of us can understand; but the sweetness of

the chocolate we ate together still lingers in my mouth.

Like our efforts to express love with something sweet, even if it is not sweet, love requires effort.

I didn't try, so I lost him. Still, I don't feel sad or regret it.

We remember, and I remember, us, each other, the moment, the place.

With the bitter aftertaste of chocolate.

Aisha Kwon

Ты знаешь, бытует мнение, что произнесенные человеком вслух слова влияют на его тело и душу. Как тебе слово «любовь»? Вот оно-то, должно быть, действует мёдом на сердце. Я просмаковала его в разных языках, и ты не поверишь, к чему меня привело мое любопытство.

У итальянцев оно отдает солоноватостью морского бриза и растопленным молочным шоколадом — Amore. В словацком – это сливочно-лимонная карамелька, блестящая и тёплая – её оставили на блюдечке с заранее заботливо приготовленным завтраком; а на обеденный стол всегда поутру падало солнце — Láska. Арабское Hubb произносится целиком на тихом выдохе. Нам неизвестен момент нашей смерти, получается, каждый раз произнося его, ты рискуешь окрасить свой последний выдох пряным мягким чувством.

Прелестное слово – «любовь». Оно

звучит то сладко, то терпко; то ярко, то постепенно раскрываясь.

Но...

Я нашла еще одно слово – гораздо лучше.

Оно и есть само солнце в меду.

Оно отдает тысячами искрами ночных фейерверков; бисквитом лучших кондитерских; апрельским дождём на побережье; самым насыщенным кофе и самыми долгими ночами.

И самое интересное, я произношу его чаще, чем «любовь»: когда нахожу тебя в толпе и чувствую радость; когда спрашиваю, будешь ли ты обещать, и ты всегда отвечаешь «да»; когда прошу тебя о помощи, и ты всегда оказываешься рядом.

А ещё я помню, когда произнесла его в первый раз: когда представившись, ждала твоей очереди.

Аденова Айым

A Heart of Gold: Zarlasht Sarmast's resilient journey of hope

Zarlasht Sarmast, a 25-year-old Afghan graduate of the American University of Central Asia in 2020 and current Coordinator of the OSUN Global Engagement Fellows Program, played a pivotal role in 2021 by aiding in the evacuation of AUFA students to Bishkek under the guidance of Dr. Jonathan Becker, the former AUCA president and development office at AUCA, the International Students Office, the Finance Office, and a few others.

Through her photo storybook, «A Journey from Kabul to Bishkek,» Zarlasht sheds light on the challenging journey Afghan students completed to find safety. Zarlasht Sarmast stands as an inspiration to embrace humanity and stand together in times of crisis.

Zarlasht embodies the meaning of her name, with Zar symbolizing gold and lasht translating to branch in Pashto, one of the official languages of Afghanistan. With her elegant features and olive-toned skin, basking in the Afghan sun, she reflects wisdom in her gaze. Graduating in 2020 from the ICP Department, she has a professional background with organizations like the ICRC, UNAMA, and the OSCE Academy. Despite her early days as a student in Bishkek, she emerged as a respected leader, a journey that would be tested when the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan.

“I remember, even during those days, I had a feeling that Kabul would not fall, everything would be okay, and I could go back soon and see my family,” says Zar. As the Taliban seized control of

Afghanistan, Zar felt helpless in Bishkek while working on her master's thesis. All she wanted was a glimpse of hope for the future of her people. With Dr. Jonathan Becker leading the aid to Afghan students at AUFA, Zar made a life-changing decision to join the team and assist in bringing students to safety. In the midst of chaos and despair, she discovered a ray of hope shining through.

“I think it was one of the best decisions I made,” Zar shares.

The evacuation process from Kabul to Bishkek started with the help of Zar. First, security measures for students were put in place. Then, suddenly, Zarlasht received pictures and videos from one of the students. The picture showed that the Taliban had started whipping and beating the students and others at the border. Zar couldn't watch and deleted them on the spot. Students in that group couldn't cross the border that day. Some of them had come to Kabul from other provinces. For them, it meant going back to their provinces for a couple of days. But it was not the end.

The regular communication between Zar and students, the commitment of the team with very little sleep, putting this mission as a top priority, the bravery of students, the help from governmental sectors like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, and the financial support of the OSF and OSUN made the evacuation possible, group by group, this time. Zar says, with a pleasant smile, “We made it to Pakistan!” It was a moment of validation, reinforcing the fact that the

whole team got optimistic to get all the students out. The first group of students arrived in Bishkek and were picked up at the airport by colleagues from the International Students Office of AUCA. Zar, with a soft voice, says, “I was excited to welcome students myself, but I had to work on the next evacuation.” Zar retells the feelings of AUFA students: “Moving to a new country and starting over is one of the scariest things for anyone, especially when you have to leave your country and it is not your choice.”

Ahmad Bais Oryakhel

“I missed home badly, wishing Afghanistan were a peaceful country and families were not forced to be separated. I was wounded deep inside.”

Hanifa Yari

“During that period, students in Bishkek received psychosocial support to manage the stress and trauma of the evacuation.”

“I will always carry this trauma in my heart and mind,” states Zar.

300 students from AUFA came to Bishkek, and some went to America safe and sound, studying with full scholarships. Zar likened this journey to a breathtaking roller coaster ride, marked by fear, exhaustion, and unexpected moments of exhilaration. However, her efforts paid off, and every single student was successfully evacuated.

By Hoda Sadat



Pros and cons of AI in the Education system

In previous years, education has shifted its focus from acquiring knowledge to developing skills. Following the modern workforce, education systems now concentrate on fostering creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy skills. This transformation has been brought about by the advancements in technology, mainly Artificial Intelligence. The integration of AI into the educational system has brought significant accessibility changes to learners, such as accessing personalized learning, interactive learning, data-driven insights, and worldwide scientific resources. For instance, as a Software Engineering student, in case of a technical problem in my code or program, I can solve the problem with the help of AI, which is data-driven, instead of scheduling time with a professor, which requires time and energy from both of us. At the same time, AI brings issues of privacy, human interaction, and unequal access to technology by underserved communities. The use of AI has increased, thus increasing the dependency of humans on technology in doing critical tasks, resulting in a lack of human interactions. AI also collects large amounts of data from individuals in the educational sector, creating the threat of data leaks and misuse

of information. In the case of data leaks, a small group will gain control over the data, which can be used to control societies and its citizens' behaviors. Thus, humanity will experience a historical data- and cyber-war. In short, though we are mainly focusing on the comforting prospect of AI, we should not neglect the consequences of its dark side.

Question 1: How does AI contribute to solving complex problems in your field of study, and what limitations or challenges do you foresee?
Begaiym Niiazbekova (SFW-120)

I use AI for coding tasks, and it truly contributes to solving my tasks. It shortens the amount of time I would spend on the task without AI. But of course, it's not the ultimate problem solver, and you have to know how to use that tool to get the maximum performance out of it.

Question 2: Can AI systems be biased, and if so, how can we mitigate bias to ensure fairness and equity in AI applications?
Begaiym Niiazbekova (SFW-120)

AI tools can be biased, as can all other sources of information. AI is trained on large amounts of text sources and can not only give biased but even false information.

To avoid biased information,

we all have to double-check information, look for different sources, and treat every piece of information with skepticism. This applies not only to AI but to every other source of information.

Question 3: What ethical considerations should AI developers and policymakers take into account when designing and deploying AI technologies?
Ahmad Ahmad Zai (SFW-121)

AI developers have to follow certain ethical considerations, such as avoiding any type of discrimination, racism, violent content, etc. AI tools have to be free from racial stereotypes and dangerous content and avoid spreading misinformation.

Question 4: What role do explainability and transparency play in AI algorithms, and how can we ensure accountability and trustworthiness in AI systems?
Aziza (SFW-121)

The trustworthiness of AI mostly depends on the model it's trained on. To ensure the trustworthiness and accountability of AI algorithms, we should use clear and understandable models, regularly check AI for fairness, etc.

AUCA Student Senate's impactful initiatives: a February report

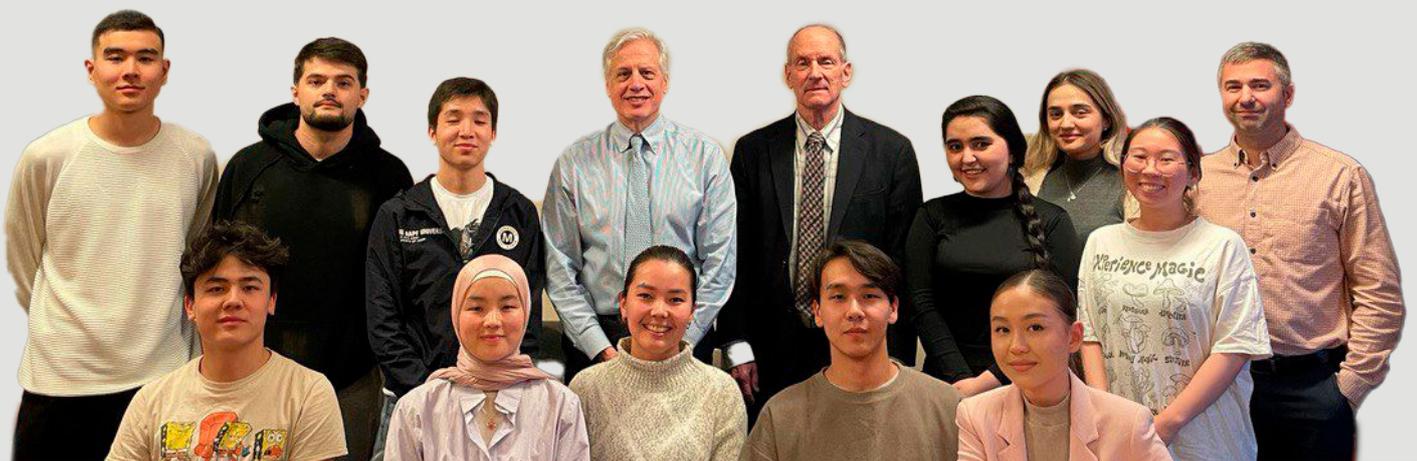
The American University of Central Asia's (AUCA) Student Senate launched a number of exciting projects in the busy month of February with the goal of improving students' overall university experience and tackling important concerns on campus. The Student Senate demonstrated an unwavering commitment to their plans and successfully implemented measures to address technical challenges and water shortages, and strategic planning for the future. One of the significant highlights of the month was the proactive approach taken towards resolving technical issues on campus. In collaboration with the Physical Plant Department (PPD) office, the Student Senate actively engaged in discussions to identify and rectify technical issues, notably: addressing water-related concerns. Recognizing the importance of swift problem-solving, the Senate initiated an online survey where students could report any water-related issues across the university. This innovative approach ensured a streamlined process, allowing for prompt resolution of concerns raised by students. Moreover, the Student Senate demonstrated their dedication to academic planning and strategic partnerships by holding meetings with Dr. Saniia Toktogazieva, the Dean of Academic Planning and Strategic Partnerships. These sessions facilitated discussions on future strategic plans for the university, emphasizing collaboration between students and academic leadership to enhance the overall educational experience. In an effort to fortify communication channels and advocate for student interests, the Student Senate engaged in a pivotal meeting with key figures in the university's leadership. David Lakhdir (Chair of

the Board), Jonathan Becker (Board of Trustees), and Timothy O'Connor (President) participated in discussions centered around the Student Senate's programs and proposed solutions. This dialogue fostered a collaborative environment where student concerns were addressed directly by those in influential positions, emphasizing the importance of a unified approach towards enhancing the student experience.

Adding to it, the Student Senate organized a Spirit Week of activities that showcased the active participation of AUCA students. From daily events with exciting prizes to a memorable movie night, the week not only offered students a break from their academic routines but also served as a platform for fostering a sense of community within the university. To further encourage open communication, the Student Senate invites students with concerns or questions to reach out via email to studentsenate@auca.kg. This way of transparent communication ensures that the Student Senate remains accessible and responsive to the needs of the student body.

In summary, February was a month of commendable achievements for AUCA's Student Senate. Their commitment to addressing technical challenges, water shortages, and strategic planning initiatives reflects their dedication to enhancing the overall student experience. As they continue to work tirelessly for the betterment of the university, the Student Senate stands as a testament to the power of student-led initiatives in shaping a thriving academic community.

Anisa Taigunshoeva
JMC-120



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