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What role should students play in administrative and education reform at their universities? What has the American experience taught UGRADers about this issue? Read about it in the "point of view!"

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UGRAD participants and alumni share their community service experience in the United States and at home. What has America taught them about community service? In what ways can their American experience be applied at home?

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2005-2006 UGRAD participants are learning about American life and culture in their everyday experiences on the program. "Letters from America" brings you their impressions.

in the community p.8-13

UGRAD alumni are a community of active young professionals who contribute to the development of their countries. Across Eurasia alumni work with youth, educate and share American culture and their exchange experience, contribute in the business sector, enter the government ranks and excel professionally.

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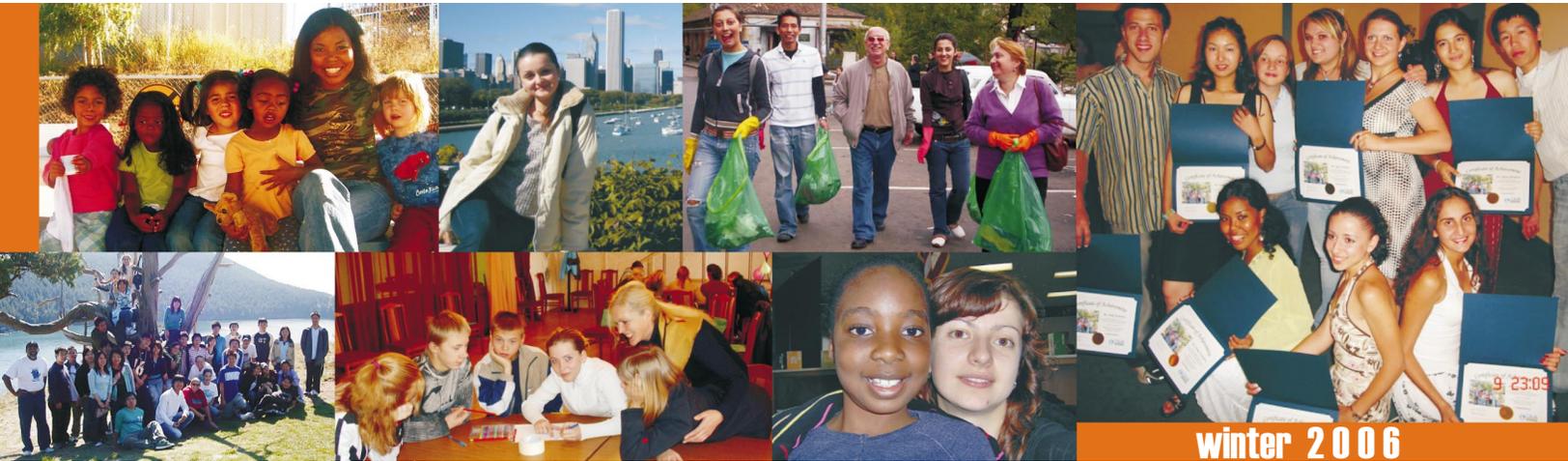
IREX is pleased to introduce the 2005-2006 UGRAD alumni fellows. Alumni fellows are appointed for a term of one year and are responsible for planning and implementing UGRAD alumni activities in their countries.



Notes FROM UnderGrad



Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program



winter 2006

About THE Newsletter

Notes from UnderGrad is a forum for the Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program community to express views and share the UGRAD program participant and alumni experience. Published three times a year, the newsletter is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and produced by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State fosters mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through international educational and training programs. The bureau does so by promoting personal, professional, and institutional ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad, as well as by presenting U.S. history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences.

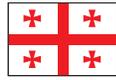


IREX

IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) is an international nonprofit organization specializing in education, independent media, Internet development, and civil society programs. Through training, partnerships, education, research, and grant programs, IREX develops the capacity of individuals and institutions to contribute to their societies. Since its founding in 1968, IREX has supported over 15,000 students, scholars, policymakers, business leaders, journalists, and other professionals.

Taking small steps to be a part of big changes

By **Ketevan Vatiashvili**
2004-2005, Georgia



We often wait for somebody to do something. We often talk about what needs to be done and criticize others. Why not ask ourselves: "What am I doing to solve the problem and to change something for the better?"

Those are the questions that may change you if you think about them carefully. You, as a student, can do a lot to foster administrative and educational reform at your universities. Do you remember what America taught us? It taught us to set high goals and to find ways to achieve them.

Everyone aims to study at a prestigious university on an international level. What

makes a university prestigious? Is it its name, age, size, founder, location? Who is responsible for making a good name for the university? Is it anybody special? Maybe YOU! Why not?

All of us were happy to study at American universities with better programs and conditions. We learned we can make a change by acting. What do I suggest? It is very simple – start out by believing that you can do something to change things around you.

I talked a lot with my professors in Georgia about the US education system and made several presentations about my experience in the US. For example, I talked about

the importance and advantages of using a syllabus for a class as well as the evaluation forms that students fill out anonymously at the end of the semester, evaluating both the professor and the usefulness of the course.

I was happy to hear that some of my professors are seriously thinking about using similar tools in their teaching. They agree with me that such minor changes don't require the approval of the Georgian education system and can be adopted by professors.

Remember, everything that is big now started with something small. You can take small steps now and be part of big changes later. That's what I'm calling you to do!

point of view

Reform on Campus: Students' Role and Responsibility

What role should students play in administrative and education reform at their universities? What has the American experience taught UGRADers about this issue? Read about it in the "point of view!"



Spotlight on UGRAD academic excellence

UGRAD alumni win academic scholarships



Yevgeniya Tretyakova (2004-2005, Ukraine) is one of the four winners of the 2005 Frantskevich scholarship in Ukraine. Tretyakova is currently a third-year student in management at European University, Chernigiv branch. The Frantskevich scholarship assists talented students in pursuing their degrees in finance.



Ilia Vinokourov (2003-2004, Russia) is one of the winners of 2005 Potanin Federal Scholarship Program in Russia. The goal of the program is to help young leaders and exceptional students pursue their degrees and professional goals in Russia. Vinokourov is currently a 4th year economics student at Immanuel Kant State University in Kaliningrad, Russia.

Developing student activism

By **Alexandr Svetlicinii**

2002-2003, Moldova



There is a clearly defined market for education in our countries. Universities compete with each other for students, government subsidies and international recognition. In order to fully benefit from the educational process students should be able to take full advantage of the services offered by their universities. Unfortunately, most universities in Eurasia do not treat students as their customers, but more as subordinates who have to comply with a variety of regulations or face the penalties.

That is why student activism is of crucial importance in the changing this attitude and increasing the role students play in the institutional decision-making process. Student activism could be organized in a variety of forms: student governments, councils, clubs, organizations and campaigns. The main challenge is to mobilize students to stand up for their rights and interests, and not yield to the administrative pressures and constraints. There is a clear need for efficient leaders who will communicate and promote the idea of student activism. I believe that we, UGRAD alumni, could and should assume this role.

Following the UGRAD alumni regional conference in Moldova on Transparency in Higher Education in spring 2005, there have been several alumni initiatives to introduce the academic honor code in our home universities. For example, I started the development of a training session for high-school graduates to familiarize them with the academic honor code standards that I observed in the US. This is only one example of UGRAD alumni contributing to the development of student activism at their universities. We, UGRAD alumni, have seen how student activism functions on American campuses, and we can introduce some of the practices we observe in our home institutions.



Spotlight on UGRAD academic excellence

UGRAD alumni win academic scholarships



Anar Umurzakova
and **Olzhas Bilyalov**

(2003-2004, Kazakhstan) are finalists of "Bolashak," the International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Umurzakova graduated with honors from Kazakh National University and holds a BA in Management.

Bilyalov has worked for World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development projects in the transport sector as well as for the Administration of the President of Republic of Kazakhstan.

point of view

Students can make a difference

By **Anastasiya Zdzitavetskaya**

2005-2006, Belarus



Student leadership and responsibility are among the most distinctive features of American universities and colleges. This statement applies not only to well-developed systems of student government associations, but also to the way classes are organized. A lot of emphasis is put on teamwork that involves revealing one's potential as a project manager as well as developing the ability to work within a team, to find compromise and to be responsible. In my opinion, American universities are a reflection of a society of rules and freedoms. Students follow the rules, but they use their freedom to make decisions crucial for their student community.



Most universities in my country have student government associations, but their activity is limited to a small number of social responsibilities. These associations are not independent, decisions that they make are influenced by university administration. Because of this fact students are not motivated to devote their time and energy to benefit their university. On the other hand, building a strong community feeling on campus is very important for universities in our countries. I think that this can be achieved only by creating independent student government organizations that will give students an opportunity to play an active role in the life of their university. I truly believe that only through active participation in the decision making processes can one become a responsible community member, be it a university campus community or one of the whole country.

3 Notes
from
UnderGrad

point of view

Extending a helping hand

By Kanykei Latipova
2005-2006, Kyrgyzstan



As part of my UGRAD program experience I volunteered with Helena Food Share, an organization that provides emergency food boxes to local residents in need. Every hour spent working for my community service host was enjoyable for me. During my volunteer experience I saw that Americans are willing to help others through their donations and involvement in community services. I was encouraged by people's generosity when they donated food. Moreover, I met wonderful staff and volunteers who were open and kind with me. The productive experience I gained volunteering with Helena Food Share inspired me to do more to help those in need. I will do my best to initiate similar services in Kyrgyzstan, to encourage Kyrgyz citizens to help others.

the value of community service



UGRAD participants and alumni share their community service experience in the United States and at home. What has America taught them about community service? In what ways can their American experience be applied at home? Read about it in the "value of community service!"

Spotlight on UGRAD community involvement

UGRAD alumni help mentally disabled in Armenia

 In September 2005, Armenian UGRAD alumni implemented a project entitled "Integrating Mentally Disabled People Into Our Society" in Yerevan. The goal was to support the newly opened SAHAK NGO that works to teach the mentally disabled practical skills. Alumni organized a fair of crafts created by the disabled community. Proceeds collected from the sale of crafts were donated to support SAHAK activities.

UGRAD alumni clean-up Kutaisi, Georgia

 In October 2005, Georgian UGRAD alumni organized a clean-up of Kutaisi streets and the central park. Alumni inspired the local community to take part in the activity, including the former deputy rector of Kutaisi State University. Alumni worked hard to fill up many trash bags and now plan to take the clean-up project to new sites around Georgia.

UGRAD alumni care for a reservoir in Uzbekistan

 In August 2005, Uzbek UGRAD alumni demonstrated their commitment for helping preserve the local environment by cleaning the Charvaq reservoir, a polluted lake beach outside of Tashkent. This team-building activity was an opportunity for alumni to work together and share their enthusiasm for volunteering and caring for the local environment with the local community.

Bringing cultures closer together

By **Veronica Rozyqova**

2004-2005, Tajikistan



While performing my community service project during the UGRAD program I gained a lot of valuable experience, learned about American culture and had a lot of fun! For example, volunteering with the Blood Drive project gave me an opportunity to see the generosity of Americans; I was very impressed by the great quantity of people who were ready to donate their blood. I think that my community service experience in the US can be applied in Tajikistan. Here is a recent example. This past fall several alumni and myself visited a regional orphanage in Tajikistan to introduce the Halloween tradition

to the children. We explained the meaning of the holiday and its history, showed how to carve pumpkins, did some face painting and introduced the candy giving tradition to the children. I believe this example proves that while American and Eurasian cultures are very different, UGRAD alumni can bring them closer together by performing this type of community service projects in their home countries!



the value of community service



I believe that my volunteer service during the UGRAD program was an awesome experience. It helped me learn and grow and I was able to contribute to my host community during my one-year stay in the United States. It was an amazing experience and I will certainly continue the trend in Moldova.

By **Adrian Vrabie**

2004-2005, Moldova

Learning from the spirit of Thanksgiving

By **Dilara Huzeynzade**

2005-2006, Azerbaijan



I conducted community service projects with three different hosts during my first UGRAD program semester. One project was with a Salvation Army store; another project with a local retirement home, and the third project related to celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday. As a member of Calling All Colors club I coordinated the Thanksgiving Basket Delivery project this year. I gathered information about

local families in need and found volunteers to donate food and to deliver baskets to over twenty families. This project was a great success! There are many families that need financial and moral support in Azerbaijan as well. Before the program I was involved in different community service projects in Baku. For example, our school frequently collected money and clothes for families in need in the regions.

Following the UGRAD program I will share my community service experience in Mount Vernon with my friends in Azerbaijan. I will work to attract more and more people to community service in my country. My community service work has given me a feeling of accomplishment and I strongly believe that this work contributes to the development of local communities that leads to the prosperity of the country as a whole.

the value of community service

5 Notes
from
UnderGrad

Building bridges between America and Siberia

By Tatyana Gorshunova
2005-2006, Russia



My experience in the United States gave me a deeper understanding of the importance of interaction between people. The UGRAD program is a great opportunity to be exposed to a different society and to get your feet wet in a different culture. While studying in the United States I realized that human relations are the most

valuable thing in the world. But very often stereotypes can be blinders that prevent us from establishing these relations.

I am currently working on a project that will help break such stereotypes and bring new international contacts to my region, Altaiskiy krai, Russia. This past semester I attended a conference at Georgetown University in Washington, DC,

where I learned about programs that can help build communication bridges between American students and students in Southern Siberia. For me the value of education is not only gaining new knowledge but also taking action. I believe that my UGRAD program experience in the United States will help build small, but stable bridges between American and Russian students.

letters from America

Each day brings something new

By Regina Griciuc
2005-2006, Moldova



The greatest thing about the UGRAD program and studying in the United States is that you never know what is going to happen tomorrow because each day brings something new, exciting, different and totally unexpected. Probably it has something to do with the amazing people that surround me here. I made many friends who help me a lot and go on helping me each time I need help. We traveled together around the country, some invited me to their houses and introduced me to their family. It was very exciting for me to meet people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I learned a lot from these interactions. In short, I am really excited about America and Americans! The UGRAD program is a great experience that I will never forget.



2005-2006 UGRAD participants are learning about American life and culture in their everyday experiences on the program.

"Letters from America" brings you their impressions.

Learning and contributing as an international student

By Sofya Tairova
2005-2006, Kazakhstan



They are quickly recognized by their speech and funny accents. Excited about American democracy and critical about American food, they are – international students. Everything seems to be exciting and unusual to international students. Our eyes are happy to observe different surroundings and the brain hungers for fresh and new impressions.

Studying abroad is a great opportunity to discover another culture, learn new things about life, and evaluate your own principles and values. International students are a great source of information about their native country. They can be the first step to establishing friendly relationships between countries that will contribute to a global conception of peace. That is what we, UGRAD program participants, strive to do during our stay in the United States!

UGRAD students shine during Graceland International Night

By **Katerina Sirinyok**
2005-2006, Ukraine

 Have you ever seen a little model of the world? Have you ever met people from thirty two countries in one evening? Well, I have, and I am tremendously proud of being a part of such a wonderful experience!

Graceland University, my host university in Lamoni, Iowa, has been the home of a great holiday that celebrates the international students that study there. This special event is called Graceland International Night. This year Graceland is home to students from thirty two countries; from Europe, Asia, South and Northern America and even Australia. During Graceland International Night everybody had an opportunity to show their own culture and share a part of it with others. Folk dances and

songs, national costumes and even a mini performance of a wedding ritual were presented on the stage of Graceland Shaw Center.

This year five UGRAD participants were part of the welcoming Graceland community: Katerina Sirinyok (Ukraine), Asel Mauletova (Kazakhstan), Saida Abdrazakova (Kyrgyz Republic), Tamar Balavadze (Georgia) and Hilola Azizova (Uzbekistan). UGRAD participants presented their countries during International Night and two UGRAD students became pioneers of their countries at Graceland. Now Graceland University has two new flags in its directory; Hilola and Asel, from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, presented their national flags to the university collection.

letters from America



Polina Ermolaeva (right) with her American friend at the University of New Orleans



Sofya Tairova (far left) and the Jacksonville intramural volleyball team



Katerina Sirinyok and Hilola Azizova with their friend from Japan (center) during Graceland International Night

Katrina creates a life-long friendship

By **Polina Ermolaeva**
2005-2006, Russia

 I spent five challenging and unforgettable days hiding from hurricane Katrina with my American friend in her family's home in Laffayette, Louisiana. It was an experience that affected my life greatly, an experience I will never forget.

It was one of those moments when common danger brings people closer. We both lost our belongings and our student status at the University of New Orleans. We both had the sense that we have no power over our destiny. Our future was uncertain. We both had to find the strength to build a new life.

It was hard to keep a positive attitude after all we experienced. But by supporting each other and sharing our feelings and fears with each other we managed to overcome this stressful time. The important thing was that we were safe and sound; everything else could be replaced and rebuilt.

This unforgettable experience in late August 2005 broke my stereotypes about Americans acting reserved and cautious towards foreigners that in my mind so widely contrasted to the wide-open Russian soul. Through this experience I opened up my mind and began to look at the world differently. I began to see the world where there are no Americans or Russians, but where people are just human beings, with similar dreams, desires and fears.

169 students from over 70 cities across Eurasia are participants of the 2005-2006 UGRAD program

letters from America

7 Notes from UnderGrad

Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumnus works in the government chancellery



David Koberidze (2001-2002, Georgia) is currently an Assistant to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Georgia. Prior to this position, Koberidze spent

a year working at the Ministry of Foreign Relations. During his final year of study at Grigol Robakidze University, he had an internship at the Ministry of Finance. Koberidze studied

business administration at Duquesne University during the UGRAD program and gained knowledge that greatly helps him in his work today.



in the community

UGRAD alumni are a community of active young professionals who contribute to the development of their countries. Across Eurasia alumni work with youth, educate and share American culture and their exchange experience, contribute in the business sector, enter the government ranks and excel professionally. Read about it – "in the community!"

UGRAD alumnus organizes field day



In August 2005, **Rustam Usmanov** (2004-2005, Uzbekistan) organized a day of summer outdoor games for forty children in the Koprikboshi neighborhood (Makhalla). The children participated in a water balloon toss and a watermelon-eating contest, among other fun games. Usmanov brought back the idea of organizing this event after he participated in field day as part of UGRAD program orientation in Washington, DC in August 2004. The alumnus worked with the social events coordinator and representatives from the Makhalla administration to implement this fun project for the children.



Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumna shares her key to success with students



Alena Budzko (2003-2004, Belarus) worked with Brest State University professors to develop and implement an American studies training course for university students. This course is designed to prepare students for participation in the Annual Regional Olympiad

in the English Language and American Studies. In 2004 Budzko took first place in the Olympiad and this year she is sharing her knowledge and experience with Olympiad participants. Budzko is also writing a book on American studies which is scheduled to be published in 2006.



in the community

UGRAD alumna encourages children's artistic talents



In April 2005, **Viktor Frolov** (1999-2000, Kazakhstan)

implemented a drawing contest at an orphanage in a small village in the Northern Kazakhstan region.

The orphanage hosts about 100 children with learning and mental disabilities. The children drew pictures that were later displayed at the school exhibition and after everybody voted for the picture

they liked the most, ten winners were awarded prizes. Frolov's project brought much needed attention to an orphanage that otherwise lacks help from the local community.

Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumnus contributes to strengthening US-Azerbaijan relations



Fariz Ilmailzade (1998-1999, Azerbaijan) was recently reelected as Chairman of the US Educated Azeri Alumni Association (AAA), a group that unites over 500 alumni of US government funded programs in Azerbaijan. The organization is registered with the Ministry of Justice,

and one of its primary goals is increasing the role that alumni play in the economic, political and social development of the country. Ilmailzade is also a program officer with the International Republican Institute. For more information about AAA activity please visit <www.aaa.org.az>.

UGRAD alumna conducts an environmental education project



In November-December 2005, **Mariya Lenska** (2004-2005, Ukraine) organized and implemented "Saying Clean and Drawing Green," an ecological art contest at Dyvosvit, Kryvyj Rih local art school. Forty-eight children, ages five through ten, participated in the contest. The goal of the project was to teach children about the importance of environmental protection. The project included presentations about local and global environmental issues, drawing sessions, a final exhibit and an award ceremony. Lenska recruited a team of six volunteers, Sociology Department students of Kryvyj Rih Technical University, to give presentations and work with the children.



Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumna co-organizes a leadership camp

 In August 2005, **Laura Rahimova** (2002-2003, Uzbekistan) was a co-organizer of the Navoi Leadership Camp 2005: Active Members of Civil Society. As co-director, Rahimova worked with sixty students from five regions of Uzbekistan to identify conflict issues related to gender and cultural diversity in the country, and

conducted conflict resolution trainings to find ways to resolve these conflicts. The Navoi Leadership Camp 2005 was partly funded by the Democracy Small Grants Program, US Embassy and the Navoi Mining and Metallurgy Complex. This was Rahimova's second time working with the camp, this year as co-director.

in the community

UGRAD alumna shares marketing knowledge with Grodno students

 In November 2005, **Yuliya Sakovich** (2004-2005, Belarus) designed and conducted a seminar in Methods of Contemporary Marketing for students of the Economics Department of Grodno State University. Sakovich taught the concepts, strategies and techniques of modern marketing that she learned during her studies at Oklahoma State University as part of the UGRAD program. During the seminar Sakovich engaged students in a discussion about how American marketing models and techniques can be applied in Belarus.



in the community



UGRAD alumna contributes to building mutual understanding

 In December 2005, **Meri Poghosyan** (2004-2005, Armenia) gave children with visual impairment a reason to smile. She organized a project at the school for children with visual impairment in Yerevan. Poghosyan facilitated an activity during which fifteen visually impaired children were paired up with volunteers to create beautiful figurines out of modeling clay. As the result of this project children learned to understand and respect each other, and to work together despite their differences. Poghosyan organized this project to mark the International Day of Disabled Persons.

Model UN gains force in Armenia

 The Armenian Model UN (AMUN), a non-profit organization founded in 2003 by UGRAD alumni, organized its 4th Model UN Conference in November 2005. The conference resembled a UN Security Council session, and alumni debated the issue of Iran's nuclear development. As the result of the conference participants improved negotiation skills and became more knowledgeable about the countries they represented, current global issues and the role of the United Nations in the world. Over twenty UGRAD alumni participated in the conference. For more information about AMUN and its past and future projects please visit <www.amun.am>.

Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumnus works

to strengthen small- and medium-size business



Kakhor Aminov (2001-2002, Tajikistan)

is Relationship Manager and Business Advisor with the USAID Enterprise Development Project, implemented by Pragma Corporation in Tajikistan. Aminov works with small and

medium-size businesses on developing their strategic business plans and provides consultations on business planning, marketing and management strategies to further advance and strengthen this sector in Tajikistan. Aminov graduated from

Tajik State University of Commerce, studied at State University of New York at Oswego as part of the UGRAD program, and received an MA in economics from Kazakh Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research.

in the community

UGRAD alumna implements a socially important project



Anna Tomchik (2001-2002, Russia) is Deputy Executive Director of the Karelian NGO Resource Center. In fall 2005, Tomchik organized a project to equip orphans with the basic legal knowledge they will need to independently support themselves once they leave the orphanage system and start professional careers. Tomchik worked with local youth organizations and NGOs to conduct a series of trainings for over forty orphans. Within this project, Tomchik also coordinated the publication of a booklet with useful information about issues related to health care, employment, education, housing; information that will help orphans' make a transition to independence. This booklet was distributed to 26 orphanages in the Republic of Karelia.

UGRAD alumni bring winter holiday cheer to children in Bishkek



The UGRAD alumni community in Kyrgyzstan has a tradition of organizing a New Year's celebration for children from socially vulnerable families. In December 2005, **Nurgul Temirbekova**, **Erkayim Turdieva** (2004-2005, Kyrgyzstan) and **Suymonkul Kutbidinov** (2001-2002, Kyrgyzstan) continued the tradition by organizing a holiday celebration for fifty children in Boarding School for Mentally Challenged Children #34 in Bishkek. Alumni shared their enthusiasm and holiday spirit with the children by playing a variety of interactive games and presenting a theatrical performance with a winter theme. The children played an active role in all activities and displayed their happiness with many smiles. A gift exchange took place at the end of the event, with promises for future joint celebrations.



Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumni intern on Parliament Hill in Canada



Tetiana Orlova, **Iryna Temchenko**, **Inna Viryasova** (2002-2003, Ukraine), and **Kateryna Obvintseva**, **Krystyna Savchuk**, **Olena Scherbak**, **Dmytro Stepanov** (2003-2004, Ukraine) participated in the spring 2005 session of Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program, an internship in the Canadian House of Commons. Alumni had a unique opportunity to work with

members of the Canadian Parliament and met with prominent political figures, including the Prime Minister of Canada and the Speaker of the House of Commons. Alumni gained an insight into how a parliamentary system works in Canada and are now applying the skills gained on the program in a variety of community and social projects that they are implementing in Ukraine.

UGRAD alumni pursue degrees at Central European University

 **Liana Mikayelyan** (2001-2002, Armenia) and **Aghasi Harutyunyan** (2002-2003, Armenia) won full scholarships to study at Central European University (CEU), in Budapest, Hungary. Mikayelyan is pursuing an MA in political science and Harutyunyan an MA in international relations and European studies. Alumni plan to come back to Armenia following their study at CEU and apply what they learned to the development of their country.

in the community

UGRAD alumni introduce an American holiday in local schools

 In October 2005, five UGRAD alumni in Belarus organized a Halloween celebration for children in secondary schools in Gomel, Brest and Grodno. Alumni planned an exciting and fun event at each school. Children learned about the history of the holiday, made costumes and designed cards. Alumni held a story competition, where children recited tales in English and played team games. All activities were designed to improve the children's English language skills and raise interest in American holidays and culture. "It was an amazing experience! Nothing compares to bringing these children such happy moments!" alumni said following the events.



in the community

UGRAD alumnus opens the world for children in Ashgabad

 **Dayanch Hojagyeldiyev** (2004-2005, Turkmenistan) founded and organized the Young Explorer Geographical Club in Ashgabad in summer 2005. The club met at the local library where Hojagyeldiyev taught children about world geography and cultures. During one class he shared pictures from his UGRAD program experience in the United States. Many children discovered America for the first time from seeing the pictures. Hojagyeldiyev's efforts and enthusiasm encouraged the Young Explorer Club members to appreciate and be more open to representatives of different cultures. News about the club's success spread through the community and the club was overwhelmed with many requests for membership. Hojagyeldiyev will apply for grants to continue the club's activity.



Spotlight on UGRAD upward mobility

UGRAD alumnus succeeds in banking in Georgia

 **Lasha Amaglobeli** (2000-2001, Georgia) is branch manager at TBC bank, Nadzaladevi branch. Amaglobeli manages a portfolio of over \$7 million, and supervises more than twenty employees providing retail service to businesses in Tbilisi. TBC bank is the largest commercial bank in Georgia today. Prior to his current position, Amaglobeli worked with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the United Georgian Bank, and later as a credit manager with a regional TBC branch in Rustavi. Amaglobeli gained practical experience working at accounting firms while on the UGRAD program in the US, and this knowledge helps him in his everyday work.



UGRAD alumnus is an exemplary public servant



In fall 2005, **Tudor Ulianovschi** (2002-2003, Moldova) was appointed to the position of Attaché at the Division of the Americas, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova. He serves as Desk Officer for

Mexico and South America. Since 2000 Ulianovschi has also volunteered with the National Bureau for the Defense of Patient's Rights and the National Center for the Defense of Recruits and Servicemen's Rights in Moldova, providing legal consultations

to people whose rights have been violated. Ulianovschi graduated from the Department of Law at International Independent University of Moldova in June 2005. He is now pursuing an MA in international law at the same university.

in the community

UGRAD alumna teaches children to protect the environment



In August 2005, UGRAD alumni visited forty-five children at the Buzmein orphanage at their Bagir summer camp. The main objectives of this visit were to celebrate the beginning of the new school year and to discuss topics of environmental protection with the children. **Gulnara Toyjanova** (2004-2005, Turkmenistan) played a key role during this visit by giving a lecture about the importance of protecting the environment. During the UGRAD program Toyjanova was a member of Students for Social Justice, an organization dedicated to protecting the global environment, and shared this experience with the audience. She also discussed different solutions to preventing water pollution in Turkmenistan.

UGRAD alumni share their spirit for volunteerism with local communities



In December 2005, **Sevinj Mammadova** (2004-2005, Azerbaijan) and **Naila Mammadova** (2003-2004, Azerbaijan) organized an intellectual and talent competition for children in Ganja school #39. Six teams of students competed in a number of contests, including a musical competition, created by alumni. After the competition alumni talked about their US community service experience and shared their enthusiasm for volunteerism with the children. A local TV station, Alternative TV, filmed an episode on Ganja television about this project, including an interview with one of the alumni about her UGRAD program experience.



In December 2005, **Tural Ahmad** (2004-2005, Azerbaijan) together with sixteen children from Orphanage #3 in Baku planted trees and did landscape work to make the orphanage grounds ecologically cleaner and safer for the children. Ahmad held this activity to introduce International Volunteer Day to the local community. An article about this project appeared in Ayna, a local newspaper, to encourage Baku citizens and organizations to conduct similar activities for the community.

IREX is pleased to introduce the 2005-2006 UGRAD alumni fellows. Alumni fellows are appointed for a term of one year and are responsible for planning and implementing UGRAD alumni activities in their countries.



Tatevik Matinyan
Vanadzor, Armenia
2003-2004
University of Nebraska

One of my goals as an Alumni Fellow is to strengthen the alumni community by bringing together alumni from different regions and cities of Armenia. Only a strong and well-organized alumni community can have a serious impact on the development of our country.
<tatwings@yahoo.com >



Mekan Bashimov
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
2004-2005
Murray Sate University

People stay happy and inspired for different reasons. I draw inspiration through serving my community and helping people. My primary goal as an Alumni Fellow is to involve UGRAD alumni in different projects in their communities that will benefit local society.
<mbashimov@iatp.edu.tm>



Nurzhan Kozhakhmetov
Almaty, Kazakhstan
2004-2005
Bowling Green State University

My goal as an Alumni Fellow is to unite our alumni, to contribute to their professional growth and to give support to the local community. I will encourage alumni to keep active and to share their American experience with the local community.
<Nkozhakhmetov@irex.kz>



Pavel Sarghi
Chisinau, Moldova
2004-2005
University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Being an Alumni Fellow is both an honor and a great responsibility. As an Alumni Fellow my goal is to organize events that will assist alumni in areas they are most interested in. Being part of the family means sharing and collaborating, and thus, I intend to bring alumni together and to find areas where we can work together.
<sarghipaull@gmail.com>



Anton Garmoza
Krasnodar, Russia
2004-2005
Duquesne University

What excites me the most about my position as an Alumni Fellow is the opportunity to work with other UGRAD alumni. It is a great pleasure to meet people who share my ideals and to see their desire to make a difference. I find working with alumni extremely rewarding.
<garmoza@mail.ru>



Ketevan Vatiashvili
Gori, Georgia
2004-2005
Francis Marion University

As an Alumni Fellow I am doing my best to create an environment where alumni can directly apply their US experience at home, and continue growing both professionally and personally. Alumni enthusiasm and success have shown me that I have reached my goals through the alumni activities I have been organizing.
<ketevan23@gmail.com>



Igor Sivash
Horlivka, Ukraine
2004-2005
SUNY Oswego

At SUNY Oswego I joined the International Student Association (ISA) where I held the position of public relation officer. Together with other ISA board members I planned and arranged various events for the international students. My ISA experience helped me develop project management skills that I now use in my position as an Alumni Fellow.
<lgorsivash@yahoo.com>

2005-2006 UGRAD alumni fellows



Iryna Temchenko
Ternopil, Ukraine
2002-2003
Slippery Rock University

My major goals as an Alumni Fellow are to help the alumni community grow and develop through cooperation, mutual exchange of knowledge and experience and joint practical implementation of ideas and projects.

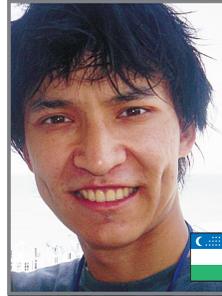
<itemchenko@yahoo.com>



Veronika Rozyqova
Dushanbe, Tajikistan
2004-2005
Chatham College

My main goal is to create a strong UGRAD alumni community in Tajikistan. UGRAD alumni are busy with work and study and it is very difficult to get them together. But I am working hard and I believe things are getting better and my goal will be achieved soon!

<razveronika@yandex.ru>



Rustam Usmanov
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
2004-2005
University of Alabama in Huntsville

After returning home from the program I realized how much UGRAD alumni could do together for our society and country. My main objectives as an Alumni Fellow are to bring UGRAD alumni together, to build a strong community and to create good traditions that will last into the future.

<rusmanov@gmail.com>



Eldar Babayev
Baku, Azerbaijan
2004-2005
Jacksonville University

I strongly believe that the alumni community in Azerbaijan can make significant contributions to the development of the country. I think that these dedicated alumni can create a better future for our people. If everyone demonstrates professionalism and takes pride in the opportunity that the UGRAD program gave them we will be able to achieve a better future for Azerbaijan.

<eldaronline@yahoo.com>



Alena Budzko
Brest, Belarus
2003-2004
Kansas State University

People say that happiness lies in serving your ideals and helping the course that you believe in. I am a firm believer in the value of education and active youth that dares to change the world. As an Alumni Fellow I seek to organize activities that contribute to alumni empowerment, enhancing their professional and leadership potential.

<alenabudzko@yahoo.com>



Suymonkul Kutbidinov
Bishkek, Hyrgyzstan
2001-2002
Lincoln Trail College

UGRAD alumni in Kyrgyzstan are a community of progressive youth. You can see them successfully working in various institutions and projects. Alumni have initiated many projects aimed at community education and development. By putting together their experience and knowledge they can greatly contribute to development of Kyrgyzstan and they are already doing it.

<skutbidinov@irex.kg>



Maria Prikhodko
Krasnoyarsk, Russia
2004-2005
University of St. Thomas

In my opinion being an Alumni Fellow means not only serving as a link between ECA, IREX and UGRAD alumni, but also working hard to reinforce connections between diverse members of the alumni community. I am glad that I have a unique chance to get to know and meet personally so many talented, creative and ambitious people.

<promariya@yahoo.com>



In spring 2006 fellows will facilitate regional conferences focused on specific and varied themes in Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Western Eurasia for undergraduate alumni.

15 Notes from

UnderGrad

Notes from UnderGrad

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<AlamiLT@state.gov>

Mariya Chetyrkina, International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)
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Design: **Elena Vaitkiene**

Submission guidelines:

Have something to share with the UGRAD community?

We encourage you to participate and submit your articles and pictures to the newsletter!

Please submit material to
<mchetyrkina@irex.ru>.

Submissions may be edited for style and language. Not all submitted material will be printed.

Deadline for submissions for Summer 2006 issue is May 31, 2006.



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

www.state.gov



IREX

www.irex.org

alumni opportunities

U.S. Government sponsored exchange alumni are eligible to take part in various Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supported conferences and training activities. In addition to events that support large audiences, individual alumni may apply for small grants that fund the organization of community service activities, conferences, publications, Internet-related activities, research trips, training programs, the creation of associations and other activities.

ECA Alumni Programming for Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program Alumni

State Alumni Web Site: The State Alumni website is an online community by and for alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange and training programs. As of May 2004, the website has over 8,500 registered users. The content of the site is updated every day and alumni are encouraged to submit information to the website for posting. Features of the website include: calendar of upcoming alumni events, job listings and career development information, searchable database of alumni and U. S. host families who have registered at the site, grant opportunity listings, live online discussions, discussion forum, alumni news, alumni resume database, articles written by alumni, feedback form/online survey, live online guest speakers, photo gallery, and the Alumni ListServ. <<https://alumni.state.gov/>>

The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program (ASG): Alumni may apply for a grant of up to \$5,000 to conduct a community development or professional development project. Fundable project ideas include coordinating a community service project, launching a pilot program at an NGO or organizing a training program for professional colleagues and/or other alumni. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. <<http://www.irex.org/alumni/grants.asp>>

Project Smile: Project Smile is a community development program aimed at helping youth, the elderly and the disabled in Eurasia. Each grantee will receive up to \$250 to perform public service in their home city. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. <<http://www.irex.org/alumni/grants.asp>>

Alumni Events: IREX and the U.S. Embassy organize monthly alumni events in all 12 countries of Eurasia. These events include workshops, conferences, trainings, roundtable discussions, happy hours, movie nights, seminars and lectures. Larger scale events include job fairs that allow alumni to have their resumes reviewed, learn about the current job market in their home country, and meet with potential employers. IREX local offices and the Embassies encourage alumni to actively participate in the development and implementation of such events.



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