



UNIVERSITY
OF CENTRAL ASIA

University of Central Asia opens its first campus as part of broad commitment to fostering social and economic development

Kyrgyz Prime Minister Sooronbay Jeenbekov and His Highness the Aga Khan inaugurate the Naryn campus; ceremony is held under the patronage of President Almazbek Atambayev



Naryn, Kyrgyz Republic, 19 October 2016 - The University of Central Asia (UCA), created to be a catalyst for social and economic development in the region's mountain societies, today officially opened its first campus in Naryn, Kyrgyz Republic.

The new buildings on the Naryn Campus represent the first phase of a larger plan for the 252-hectare site, which was a gift from the Kyrgyz Government. Phase I includes 14,000 m² of space that can accommodate 150 students. It features state of the art classrooms, a library and laboratories; secure, modular student dormitories; faculty and staff residences; and athletic facilities of an international standard. When the final phase is complete, the campus will accommodate 1,200 students and span 125,000m².

The secular, internationally chartered, not-for-profit University is a partnership between the governments of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

The ceremony, under the patronage of President Almazbek Atambayev, was officiated by Kyrgyz Prime Minister Sooronbay Jeenbekov and His Highness the Aga Khan.

Prime Minister Jeenbekov spoke directly to UCA students by declaring that the University would provide them with “the knowledge and skills necessary for you to become future leaders in different areas”. Calling this “a gift for all of us”, he expressed his special gratitude to His Highness the Aga Khan for his long-term vision going on to say that, “the future of our country is in the hands of our youth. Quality professional education must therefore facilitate the preparation of young people.”

“It is important to know that what we are doing here will be a valuable example of international cooperation for the future not only here in the region, but also for people far beyond the region,” said His Highness the Aga Khan speaking at the ceremony. “What

this University is all about is not only the power of education, but also the power of international cooperation. It is a power that can change peoples' lives.”

He went on to note that UCA was “not a typical start-up university,” remarking on the University’s School of Professional and Continuing Education, which has already taught over 90,000 people ranging from members of parliament to computer technicians. He also commented on the Humanities Project, which has attracted support from 77 other universities and colleges throughout Central Asia, and two of the University’s research arms, the Institute of Public Policy and Administration and the Mountain Societies Research Institute which are already doing “path-breaking research” and cooperating with international partners on issues that will be central to the region’s progress.

The launch of the Naryn Campus is to be followed by the construction of campuses of equal size and stature in Khorog, Tajikistan (scheduled to open in 2017) and in Tekeli, Kazakhstan (expected to open in 2019).

The undergraduates in Naryn earned a seat in the inaugural class through a competitive, merit-based and needs-blind admissions process. The University is providing financial aid to every member of the Class of 2021; no qualified student was denied admission because of economic circumstances. The students come from urban centres, secondary cities and small villages across the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nearly 40 per cent of the first 71 students who joined in September 2016 are women.

Also addressing the gathering, Eraj Uzoqov, a student at the Naryn campus, remarked: “Not only are my classmates diverse, our faculty and staff are also from different parts of the world. They come from as far away as Canada, US, Philippines, Germany, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and as close as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Your Highness, you have spent years advocating for pluralism and diversity around the world, and I humbly submit that this Naryn Campus is an embodiment of your vision.”

The economic impact of the University’s three campuses is projected to be more than US\$ 750 million in the Central Asian region. In the first phase of construction, UCA created 600 new jobs in the Kyrgyz Republic as well as 800 at the Tajikistan site. The University’s approach to planning and building is part of a larger strategy to boost local economies by sourcing local and regional materials, strengthening existing enterprises and promoting the establishment of new ones.

Following the ceremony, the Prime Minister and His Highness the Aga Khan joined Naryn Governor Amanbay Kayipov for the inauguration of Seitally Jakypov Park in the centre of Naryn. As part of AKDN’s broader commitment to the Naryn area, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture rehabilitated the Park, creating space for leisure, play and exercise. The nearby Medical and Diagnostic Centre was built and is operated by the Aga Khan Health Services.

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The *University of Central Asia* (UCA) was founded in 2000. The Presidents of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan and His Highness the Aga Khan signed the International Treaty and Charter establishing this secular and private University, which was ratified by the respective parliaments and registered with the United Nations. The Presidents are the Patrons of UCA and His Highness is the Chancellor. UCA's mission is to promote the social and economic development of Central Asia, particularly its mountain societies, by offering an internationally recognised standard of higher education. It also is dedicated to assisting the peoples of the region to preserve and leverage their rich cultural heritages. UCA's School of Professional and Continuing Education has been operating for a decade. More than 90,000 learners have attended the professional and vocational programmes to date.

The *Aga Khan Development Network* (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Central and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. AKDN agencies work for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society. Its annual budget for social and cultural development activities is US\$ 625 million. The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), an AKDN development agency that makes long-term investments in fragile economies, has annual revenues of over US\$ 3.5 billion, and reinvests all surpluses in further development.

Read online at: <http://www.akdn.org/press-release/university-of-central-asia-opens-its-first-campus-part-of-broad-commitment-fostering>