

**my best UGRAD p. 2-3
program experience**

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internships complete the UGRAD program journey p. 4-5

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making a difference p. 6-9

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career corner p. 10-11

UGRAD alumni grow professionally following their UGRAD program experience. They contribute to the third sector, enter the government ranks and succeed in the corporate world. As they advance professionally, they contribute to the economic and political development in their home countries.



Notes FROM UnderGrad



Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Program



spring 2007

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. The newsletter is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State and produced by IREX.



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US 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 US history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences.



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IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development. Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio of \$50 million and a staff of over 500 professionals worldwide. IREX and its partner IREX Europe deliver cross-cutting programs and consulting expertise in more than 50 countries.



my best UGRAD program experience


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my best UGRAD program experience

170 students from over 90 cities across Eurasia participated in the 2006-2007 UGRAD program.

Discovering America's Heart and Soul

By Tatiana Kopaeva
2006-2007, Russia

 I am grateful for being given the opportunity to study in the US and being able to experience life there first-hand. During my year, I gained a lot of experience and made many new friends. The program helped me to reach both my personal and professional goals. I took two poetry writing courses that helped me to understand the "American Soul." I believe that nothing can show American culture more than its literature. I discovered it being there and writing poems with my classmates.

Before going to the US, I used to write poems in my native language and then translate them into English. Now I write poems in English freely, trying to express myself in new ways. The year in the US gave me the desire to write and create, be brave and made me ready for challenges, just as Americans are. I found people with depth, who work hard to grow, help others and who are open to different cultures.

My dream is to publish a book of poems as a symbol of my immersion into American culture, my gratitude and desire to maintain interaction between our cultures to make the world we live in a better place. I want to continue to work on mutual understanding between our countries through culture and interaction.



A Little Give and Take

By Daniel Kadyrbekov
2006-2007, Kyrgyzstan



It is obvious that you will encounter challenges and obstacles when you go to a new country, meet different people and experience a foreign culture. It is part of the process of adjusting and learning new things. The greatest challenge, and at the same time, the greatest UGRAD experience that I encountered at the beginning of my stay was the politeness and positive attitude of the locals. To tell you the truth, it was difficult for me to keep myself constantly positive and have a smile plastered on my face all the time. However, being among Americans that smile and say "hello," even when they do not know you, made it much easier to adapt. It made me realize that being positive and open-minded makes people even more flexible and successful in their personal and professional lives.

Another wonderful moment during my stay was having the opportunity to present my country, Kyrgyzstan, to an American audience. While it was shocking to me that many did not know anything about the region, I viewed this as an opportunity to share something I knew a lot about.

My last greatest experience was attending an annual political science conference in Morehead, KY. There were a variety of lectures and presentations on US foreign and domestic policy-making given by senators, political science professors and students. It was very educational for me, but also, and most importantly, it was presented by the intellectual leaders who directly take part in the formulation and implementation of foreign and domestic policies.



So Much to Experience, So Little Time

By Iryna Pazdniakova
2006-2007, Belarus



In trying to think of the best experience during the year, it is too hard to choose. It was an unforgettable time that gave me a whole backpack of different experiences to carry around, and look through when I finally find some free time.

When I was traveling to the US, it was hard to imagine what to expect. At first I couldn't believe that I was on the other end of the world. The hardest part was adjusting to a new system of studying and time management. Then it became amazing and interesting to live on campus, where I had a chance to meet a lot of nice people! I got the chance to travel, which has definitely been a very enriching experience. I also joined a dance team, learned to work with clay, got a chance to run the World Club for international and American students, went to two conferences on volunteering for change, and tried smores (don't miss out). Once I adapted, I realized that there was a lot to fit into nine months of time because there is so much to choose from. And I wanted to try everything.

Being a Cultural Ambassador

By Tamar Giorgadze
2006-2007, Georgia



Every year the University of Nebraska at Kearney International Student Association organizes an International Food and Culture Festival where foods from around the world are presented and served. Besides food, international students, many dressed in their country's traditional attire, entertain attendees with their native songs, dances and performances. About 2000 people from all over the state attend the event.

As an international student I had a unique chance to represent and advertise my country, the Republic of Georgia, at the festival. I cooked the national Georgian cheese bread called *khachapuri* and played the piano. From my participation, many people became aware that there is not only the state of Georgia in the USA, but also that there is a country of the same name in Eastern Europe. I will never forget this great opportunity to represent my country. It was an educational way to bring together different cultures from around the world in the heart of Nebraska in Kearney.



Making Friends from Around the Globe

By Lela Putkaradze
2006-2007, Georgia



My best UGRAD program experience has been the friendships that I have made with students from around the world. I could not imagine that one day I would have an opportunity to make friendships with people from such a variety of cultures. It has been very interesting meeting all these students, talking about our own cultures, and finding similarities on which to base a friendship. I have also participated in many interesting events with my friends (a partnership walk, blood drive, tie dyeing, and a western party), and have been with them during the most important times in my life (Christmas, New Year, my 20th birthday, etc). We always share our best experiences with each other. I am very happy that I have had the chance to meet, interact and form strong friendships with interesting people from many countries. I will definitely miss them when I go back to Georgia, and we all hope that we can visit each other sometime in the near future and remember the nice days that we spent together.

Rising to the Challenge

By Kateryna Vakhrusheva
2006-2007, Ukraine



The time spent in America, studying in Berea College, has been the most rewarding experience in my life. At the beginning everything was new, and adapting proved to be a big challenge for me. At the same time, it was really interesting to test my strengths and to explore the new environment around me. Adjusting to a totally different system of education, constantly speaking English, making new friends, absorbing new cultures and traditions, living far from my family, changed my life in a positive way. I also learned to take responsibility for all my actions, words and promises, to be tolerant of other people, and to respect other cultures and traditions. I felt privileged to be a part of a competitive student body. Additionally, I enhanced my personal and academic knowledge from my interactions with the students and professors. The most important lesson that I have taken back with me is that through hard work anyone can excel.

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Discovering American Work Culture and Ethic in an International Corporation

By **Dinara Ayupova**
2006-2007, Kazakhstan



 My internship experience as a customer service manager in the international department at Chief Industries, a multi-national manufacturing company, has been a valuable part of my stay in the US. In this position, I have learned about the American business world, its professional standards, and even discovered unfamiliar parts of American culture. The working relationships that I built helped me gain insight into the professional values of the American worker, which include responsibility and dedication to one's job. I also had the opportunity to share my local customs and traditions with my colleagues. We often discussed and compared different topics related to work ethic and culture. Not only did this experience help me gain knowledge of a different working environment, but also inspired me to think of ways to improve my country, international relations, and promote the importance of mutual cultural understanding.

internships complete the UGRAD program journey


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internships complete the UGRAD program journey

Mutual Respect at the Workplace

By **Anastasiya Prymovych**
2006-2007, Ukraine

 I did my internship at the George Eastman House: International Museum of Photography and Film. My main responsibility was writing educational articles for the website. My supervisor taught me how to prepare for writing articles, as well as how to evaluate previous ones that I had written. This experience greatly improved my analytical ability and writing skills. Additionally, I gained unexpected insight into the mutual respect between employers and employees, and the high standards found in the American workplace when I accidentally knocked over a cup of tea on my supervisor's desk. To my surprise, instead of yelling at me, as would have happened in my home country, she just laughed and made a joke as we cleaned it up.

High Standards Equal Success

By **Lela Putkaradze**
2006-2007, Georgia

 My internship at Heidelberg USA was an invaluable and memorable part of my time in the US. First and foremost, I learned a lot about professional standards and corporate culture in American companies.



The management used technology to facilitate communication between co-workers and enable employees to complete tasks in a timely manner. Another enlightening aspect of my internship was experiencing American work culture and customer service, and working with such professional, intelligent and hard-working colleagues who were always eager to share their experience with and teach me. Lastly, from listening to customer service representatives talk with clients on the phone, I learned about relationship marketing first-hand. I want to use the standards and ideas that I learned during my internship in my home country by encouraging companies in Georgia to enhance the technology that they use, to train and invest in their employees, and most importantly, to efficiently serve their customers.

155 American organizations served as internship hosts for 2006-2007 UGRAD participants.

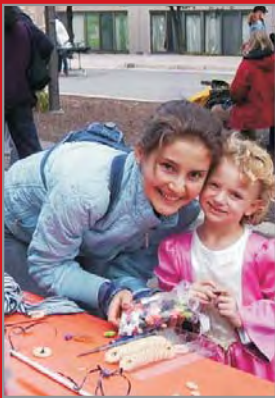
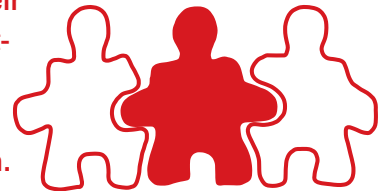


Iulian Pogor, Moldova

Business, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, ID
SUMMIT Internship: Telecom Telematique

Iulian is working on an e-governance initiative to integrate the information technology infrastructures of Romania's 15 ministries, thus improving transparency and creating a more attractive business climate. He is also researching public-private partnership options for Ghana. He will apply this knowledge to similar e-governance projects currently being planned for Moldova.

IREX is pleased to announce that seven UGRAD fellows were chosen from more than 40 applications for the 2007 Summer Internship Training Program (SUMMIT). SUMMIT program winners receive financial support to continue their professional development by doing three-month internships related to their fields of study. This post-program opportunity is jointly funded by ECA and the Starr Foundation.



Liya Pozdeeva, Russia

Economics, American University, Washington, DC
SUMMIT Internship: Deloitte & Touche, McClean, VA

Liya is working with the Global Energy & Resources team, which provides advice to top companies in the oil and gas sector. She hopes to use her experience with Deloitte & Touche to work at the Ministry of Trade in her native Tatarstan, where oil extraction is a dominant industry, and to help improve the transparency of Russian companies to make them more attractive to foreign investors.



Artyom Chelbaev, Russia

Sociology, Otero Junior College, La Junta, CO
SUMMIT Internship: Community Options, San Diego, CA

Artyom is interning with a non-profit organization that helps people with disabilities obtain employment and provides career training, and independent living services for these individuals. He plans to use this experience to improve services for disabled people in Russia, and to implement programs that will integrate them into society.



Bakhtiyor Isoev, Tajikistan

International Relations, Lees-McRae College, Banner Elk, NC
SUMMIT Internship: Open Society Institute, Washington, DC

Bakhtiyor is conducting legislative research on Central Asia, and attending conferences and congressional hearings. He hopes to use his new knowledge of American foreign policy and American foundations to obtain support for peace and conflict resolution training, Model United Nations programs, and other initiatives to contribute to the development of Tajikistan.



Bahtiyar Kurambaev, Turkmenistan

Journalism, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS
SUMMIT Internship: The Fund for American Studies, Washington, DC

Bahtiyar is an intern at the Institute on Political Journalism at Georgetown University, sponsored by the Fund for American Studies. The internship component of the program is giving him the opportunity to cover congressional hearings and research, as well as draft and edit articles for a major news publication. He hopes to become a reporter for the government news agency, to improve the professionalism of the journalism field in Turkmenistan, and to help promote media freedom and integrity by reforming the system from within.



Halyna Kurylo, Ukraine

American Studies, SUNY Oswego, Oswego, NY
SUMMIT Internship: National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders

Halyna is helping develop and conduct educational and outreach programs on anorexia and other eating disorders. She hopes to establish a similar organization in Ukraine to provide information about eating disorders and offer support to victims.



Emir Malikov, Azerbaijan

Economics, SUNY Oswego, Oswego, NY
SUMMIT Internship: Stony Brook Small Business Development Center, Stony Brook, NY

Emir is helping clients develop business plans, obtain loans to start small businesses, and is also involved with financial forecasting. He will use his SUMMIT experience to promote small business development in Azerbaijan.


internships complete the UGRAD program journey

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The UGRAD alumni projects featured in this section were made possible by the financial support of Project Smile and the Alumni Small Grants Program (ASGP), funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US Department of State.

Building Bridges Based on Care, Love, and Hope to Children who Need It the Most

 Since February 2007, **Anna Yeghoyan** (2001-2002, Armenia), a representative of the NGO Youth For Peace and Development (YFPD), has been leading an initiative to develop a long-term relationship between local teenage volunteers and slightly younger teenagers living in

the Huys (Hope) Children's Home in Gyumri, Armenia. The project, entitled Care, Love, and Hope, provides the neglected teens with the individual attention, care and love that is lacking, which is critical during this stage of development. The carefully selected and trained volunteers meet regularly to plan weekend

activities. In the last two months, they have taken the teens to the theatre, cinema, and museum of culture; invited a professional dance instructor to teach them traditional Armenian dances; conducted a clean-up and beautification of the grounds around the children's home; and organized a festival and dinner for Easter. While Anna had hoped that the project would facilitate the development of friendships between the youth volunteers and teens, she says that after only two months, the "project volunteers have already become like real family, elder brothers and sisters, to the teenagers." As the number of volunteers continues to grow, Anna and the YFPD members plan to continue their activities with the teens at the home.




making a difference




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Driving Home Community Service to Help the Disabled


 **Elena Vladimirova** (2005-2006, Russia) contributed significantly to the development of community service in Ufa by involving local students in a charity drive to collect clothes, books and toys to be sent to people with disabilities and to the District Disability Center. Vladimirova, in cooperation with her alma mater, Ufa Gymnasium 91 and its Leadership Club, organized and launched the project, which helped attract several new volunteers with a long-term commitment to the school organization. The outcomes were discussed at a conference that brought together all the project participants and community members that would like to get involved with follow-on activities. Vladimirova used this opportunity to involve other schools in the project.

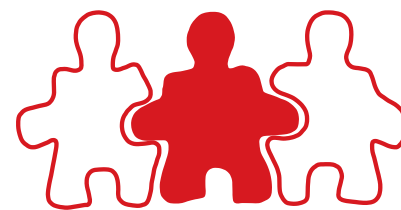


Creating a Center of Learning

 **Anastasiya Maslova** (2004-2005, Russia) established a resource and development center of English language and culture at school 61 in Uzlovaya in the Tula region. The center, open to English teachers and students, has numerous resources and materials including modern paper and electronic dictionaries, tests and audio CDs for exam preparation, books and exercises for vocabulary and grammar practice, items of classical literature in English, books on American and British culture, illustrative maps, interactive video, and DVDs and CDs for those with an interest in the English language. The center has become a focal point for various cultural and educational events in the Tula region, hosting workshops for teachers, and seminars and contests for English language students.

Bringing Smiles and Colors to Orphans

 **Maia Iosava** (2004-2005, Georgia) decided that she wanted to make Brotseula orphans in Kutaisi SMILE. She and her fellow alumni did a bit of research and figured out the best way to accomplish this. With crayons, markers, pencils and paper in hand, Maia and other alumni in Kutaisi organized a creative show and tell activity for the orphanage's 43 children called "How to See Your Future." The children, after receiving instructions from alumni to draw or write a story, eagerly set to making beautiful pictures and creating interesting stories. At the end of the activity, which indeed did make the orphans smile, they all had a chance to share their drawings and stories with their peers, and SMILE buttons were distributed as a souvenir to commemorate this day with the alumni. Maia's initiative has inspired other alumni in the region to also think about "this part of [their] future generation."




making a difference

Uniting Student Journalists

 On April 18-20, **Kateryna Sirinyok** (2005-2006, Ukraine) organized an international conference entitled Student Mass Media in Ukraine: Reality and Perspectives of Development in Zaporizhzhia. The conference gave journalism students from across Ukraine the opportunity to share their experiences producing student media. It also included trainings, conducted by local and national media experts, on professional standards in journalism and marketing development of youth mass media. Moreover, as a part of the conference, 40 Ukrainian media outlets participated in the first All Ukrainian Exhibition of Student Mass Media, and the participants created the first Ukrainian Student Association of Journalists. Zaporizhzhia National University, where Kateryna studies, supported the event.



Teaching Children Skills for Living

 On May 18, **Gulnara Toyjanova** (2004-2005, Turkmenistan) and the IREX program coordinator in Turkmenistan, visited Buzmein Orphanage outside of Ashgabat to teach the 50 young residents about the importance of education, health and sports. The discussion included an interactive introduction about ways to stay healthy, about achieving their goals and dreams and how they can help their country. After the lesson, the children divided into groups and played educational games, and were given toothpaste, toothbrushes and towels to promote healthy living. The orphans were grateful for the day of fun and activities.

UGRAD alumni celebrate Earth Day and promote environmental awareness in their communities

IREX worked with UGRAD alumni in Moldova, Russia, Armenia, and Ukraine to celebrate Earth Day 2007.

In Moldova, UGRAD and other ECA alumni spent a day doing an annual spring clean-up in the local botanical gardens. The alumni, who helped prepare the garden for the summer tourist season, especially enjoyed the teamwork and the spirit of the event. The clean-up served as a great example for the community of how residents can join the Earth Day initiative and protect the environment.

In Vladivostok, Russia, UGRAD and other ECA alumni conducted presentations in local secondary schools to celebrate Earth Day. The alumni gave students an overview of the history and goals of Earth Day, its mission of protecting the environment, and promoting a healthy lifestyle worldwide. They shared their UGRAD experience and provided examples of how they celebrated Earth Day and lived a healthy lifestyle in the United States. Finally, the alumni encouraged the students to join the worldwide celebration. Following the presentations, alumni gave out a quiz on environmental topics and awarded books to the students for their active participation in the event. The presentations were an excellent opportunity for the students to reflect on what they were doing to help protect the environment, which encouraged them to join community service events and follow a healthy lifestyle.

In Armenia, UGRAD alumni **Lusine Gasparyan** (2004-2005, Armenia), and **Ani Zakaryan** (2004-2005, Armenia) traveled to the Noubarashen school for the mentally disabled to plant 50 trees. This was done partly to beautify the school grounds, but also for practical purposes. The NGO, Armenia Forests, donated tree seedlings, which the children sowed themselves. They all worked together, with some of the participants carrying the seedlings, some the water and soil, and others just offering support. After they completed the work, they watched and then discussed short video clips on various ecological topics, such as the importance of preserving natural resources and the ways of becoming environmentally conscious citizens. As a part of the Earth Day celebration, alumni rewarded the children's hard work by giving them candy. This event not only helped the environment, it also helped raise environmental awareness amongst the participants and reached out to the school's often neglected children.

In Ukraine, UGRAD alumna **Olena Noda** (2005-2006, Ukraine) organized and implemented a project called Earth Day at Kharkiv State Technical University. Noda worked with Kharkiv youth to raise their awareness about current environmental issues and to provide them with the opportunity to get involved in the Earth Day activities. By increasing their awareness and cooperatively trying to solve environmental problems, Olena's project was successful in stimulating the students' imagination and enthusiasm for solving environmental problems.


making a difference



UGRAD alumni in Armenia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine joined the global Earth Day celebration to increase environmental awareness in their communities and to promote environmentally-friendly lifestyles among residents.



Global Youth Service Day in Turkmenistan

 On April 22, **Dayanch Hojagyeldiyev** (2004-2005, Turkmenistan) organized 130 young volunteers and ECA alumni to celebrate Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) in Turkmenistan by cleaning up Geokdere, a nature resort near Ashgabat. The event took place with the help and support of the local Ministry of Environmental Protection, IREX, and American Councils for International Education (ACCELS). The celebration began with opening remarks from Andrew Paul, Public Affairs Officer of the US Embassy in Turkmenistan. As a result of this event, the participants learned about the GYSD mission, effective practices in youth service, and civic engagement in the world today. Many of the tourists who were visiting Geokdere that day took such a strong interest in the volunteers and their work that they joined in the celebration, helping to collect and carry garbage as well as showing other volunteers the areas that needed to be cleaned. Alumni encouraged the volunteers to share their experience in the community, with the aim of promoting a spirit of volunteerism that stresses both participation and action.




UGRAD alumni played an active role in celebrating Global Youth Service Day 2007. They shared their American community service experience and mobilized youth and adults to address some of the needs of their local communities through volunteering and civic engagement.

making a difference



Global Youth Service Day in Georgia

 On April 12, UGRAD alumni in Georgia spent the day with 77 veterans and community elders at a retirement home called Savane. The elderly were very happy to interact with the young people because of their need for personal attention and lack of communication with the outside world. The residents of the retirement home shared their life stories with alumni, and discussed their hobbies and daily activities. Alumni, who did their community service in retirement homes in the United States as part of the UGRAD program, talked about their experiences from the program, highlighting various aspects of American culture, education, and academic life. Finally, the alumni met with the staff of the retirement home to discuss possibilities for future cooperation. The director of Savane updated alumni on the current situation with the home's funding, living conditions, and health of its residents. In turn, alumni briefed the retirement home's staff on how similar institutions functioned in the United States, pointing out their best practices and how they could be applied at Savane. By participating in this event, UGRAD alumni contributed to the celebration of Global Youth Service Day in Georgia.

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 **Tamara Stebunova** (2001-2002, Kazakhstan) has recently joined a leading IT and business consulting company in Kazakhstan that promotes and implements SAP software business solutions. She is employed as an SAP consultant specializing in management accounting. Stebunova's responsibilities include optimizing clients' business processes and integrating them into one software system. "We help big corporations and medium-sized companies to achieve efficiency, competitiveness, and transparency. These are the three core elements of a successful business," explains Stebunova. Prior to her experience with SAP, Stebunova worked for IREX/Kazakhstan for more than three years. Within her first year at IREX, she worked her way up from receptionist to exchange programs coordinator, and later to finance and administrative officer. As a UGRAD fellow she studied business at the University of Missouri at Columbia, which greatly contributed to her professional and personal growth.

 **Konstantin Alefirov** (1998-1999, Kazakhstan) has developed a career in marketing and advertising with Tengri Saatchi & Saatchi, a division of Saatchi & Saatchi, one of the world's leading advertising networks. Alefirov was hired in January 2006 as an account director of the Client Services Department, and in August 2007 was promoted to executive director of Tengri Brand Factory, a division within Tengri Saatchi & Saatchi.

Alefirov studied business at the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire and attributes his successful career to the experience he received and skills he developed during the UGRAD program.

 **Ksenia Dmitrieva** (2002-2003, Russia) is a senior software developer for ITPremium, a software company in Omsk. Dmitrieva has been working with ITPremium since 2004, when she joined the company as an intern. Since then she moved into a full-time position as a software developer (2005) and organized a three-month training course for newly employed software developers.

After she successfully implemented the training, Dmitrieva was promoted to senior software developer. She is currently a team leader for a group of two software developers working under her supervision. During her tenure with ITPremium, Dmitrieva initiated changes in the company's procedures that improved its performance. For example, she convinced the director that it would be more efficient if software developers had direct contact with customers. Dmitrieva studied education at Clemson University and believes that the knowledge and practical skills she gained on the UGRAD program help her a lot in her current work.



Ksenia Dmitrieva is a senior software developer for ITPremium

career corner


UGRAD alumni grow professionally following their UGRAD program experience. They contribute to the third sector, enter the government ranks and succeed in the corporate world. As they advance professionally, they contribute to the economic and political development in their home countries.



 **Marina Korneeva** (2002-2003, Russia) joined Mars in Russia in July 2004 as a business planning and trade market research analyst. Within one year she was promoted to supervisor responsible for sales planning and trade research in different Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) segments, and later to a Petcare & Mainmeal planning manager. Korneeva has three people reporting to her and her team is responsible for preparing short- and long-term plans by item and geography for up to five years in advance, researching market trends, conducting competitor analysis, pricing and distribution analysis, and supporting the business in its overall strategy development. Korneeva graduated from Bryansk State Technical University and studied at William Jewell College as part of the UGRAD program.

 **Anna Pivovarova** (2004-2005, Russia) studied economics at Hawaii Pacific University as part of the UGRAD program. In the spring of 2007, Pivovarova shared her UGRAD experience and accomplishments after the program in an essay for the Success Story! Contest organized by Procter&Gamble Russia. Pivovarova's success story was chosen among 80 essays submitted by students and recent graduates from 20 cities across Russia. In her essay, she discussed how she applied her exchange program experience to give new life and meaning to the Debate Club at Khabarovsk State Academy of Economics and Law and encourage the club members to participate in various activities, both academic and community service. One of Pivovarova's main projects

was a program of English classes for children from underprivileged families of the Khabarovsk region. As a part of her award, this summer Pivovarova will travel to Procter&Gamble's regional headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, where she will meet with its top managers.

 **Naila Mammadova** (2004-2005, Azerbaijan) studied education at Slippery Rock University as part of the UGRAD program. When she returned to her native town of Ganja, she was inspired by the valuable experience she got on the program and decided to pursue a career in education. After graduating from Ganja State University, Mammadova got a job with the Ganja Education Information Center (GEIC) and has been working there for almost six months now


as a program assistant and advisor. Mammadova's duties and responsibilities include advising students who are planning to study abroad, conducting seminars on study abroad opportunities, essay writing, successful interview tips and CV writing, TOEFL and other topics. Mammadova shares her UGRAD program experience through teaching English and organizing American culture and movie nights. The alumna promotes the values of international education and exchange through such events as International Education Week (IEW) and cooperates with the United States Peace Corps volunteers to organize educational and professional development events for Ganja residents.

After graduating from Ganja State University, Naila Mammadova got a job with the Ganja Education Information Center (GEIC)



career corner



 **Yuri Dagaev** (2004-2005, Russia) is the director of Variant, a non-governmental youth organization in Elista. Variant's mission is to increase the role of youth and their involvement in community development and to promote a healthy and active lifestyle among them. Dagaev founded Variant shortly after he returned to Elista from the UGRAD program and recruited his first team of volunteers among his friends and university classmates. Since its establishment in 2005, Variant has organized numerous events for orphans, children from underprivileged families, veterans of the World Wars and the elderly. It has also implemented an Ethnic and Religious Diversity Program to educate Kalmyk youth about cultural and religious diversity.

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Notes from UnderGrad

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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 send all material to epeachey@irex.kg.

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

The submission deadline for the Fall 2007 issue is November 30, 2007.



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alumni opportunities

US Government sponsored exchange alumni are eligible to take part in various Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supported conference 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 US 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 US 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/>](https://alumni.state.gov/)

The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program (ASG): Alumni may apply to IREX for a grant of up to \$3,000 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/programs/asgp/index.asp>

Project Smile: Project Smile, administered by IREX, 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/programs/smile/index.asp>

Alumni Events: IREX and the US 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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