

UVU Students Work to Develop Cooperative Relations Between Utah And Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a beautiful country located in Central Asia sharing a border with China. It is 90% mountains, which creates certain difficulties that many countries or provinces/states do not encounter. Utah however, while not quite as mountainous as Kyrgyzstan, has experienced to a degree some of the same issues and over time has been able to not only adapt but thrive.

Utah Valley University (UVU), under the direction of Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev and Dr. Lynn England has been able to connect with several Kyrgyz government officials in an attempt to share information, support, and cultural enlightenment. Six UVU students including myself visited Kyrgyzstan during August 2-12, 2019. During this specific trip, our group stayed in the capital city of Bishkek but was also able to visit several surrounding areas of the country including Issyk-Kul lake. During the tour, it was impossible to ignore the striking similarities between Kyrgyzstan and Utah, from the weather and climate to the mountain ranges.



Students on a hike with local Kyrgyz students

This type of experience and opportunity is exclusively unique to UVU. The University and students have developed a symbiotic relationship with the government of Kyrgyzstan that will hopefully be increasingly strengthened for the foreseeable future. The University's emphasis on

“engaged learning” provided the students with not only information and theoretical scenarios, but also the opportunity to see the principles learned in the classroom in real world situations. During our trip, we were able to meet with high-level officials such as a member of the Kyrgyz Parliament, Deputy Chair of the Kyrgyz Supreme Court, the Director of the State News Agency, and many other influential figures. These meetings and interactions gave us valuable insights into the struggles faced by the country in addition to a greater appreciation for the policies and stability enjoyed in Utah.



At the Central Asian Institute of Applied Geosciences Group photo after the dinner at local restaurant

I would highly recommend participating in this program as a student at UVU but also as a private citizen. Kyrgyzstan has many entrepreneurial opportunities that would benefit the country as well as the entrepreneurs, deepening the bond between both societies. If given the chance to join a future expedition from Utah to Kyrgyzstan, I would encourage all students to take the opportunity regardless of their current emphasis of study. The skills, connections, and knowledge gained from this trip would be invaluable to anyone in any field.

Steven Thompson, Utah Valley University student