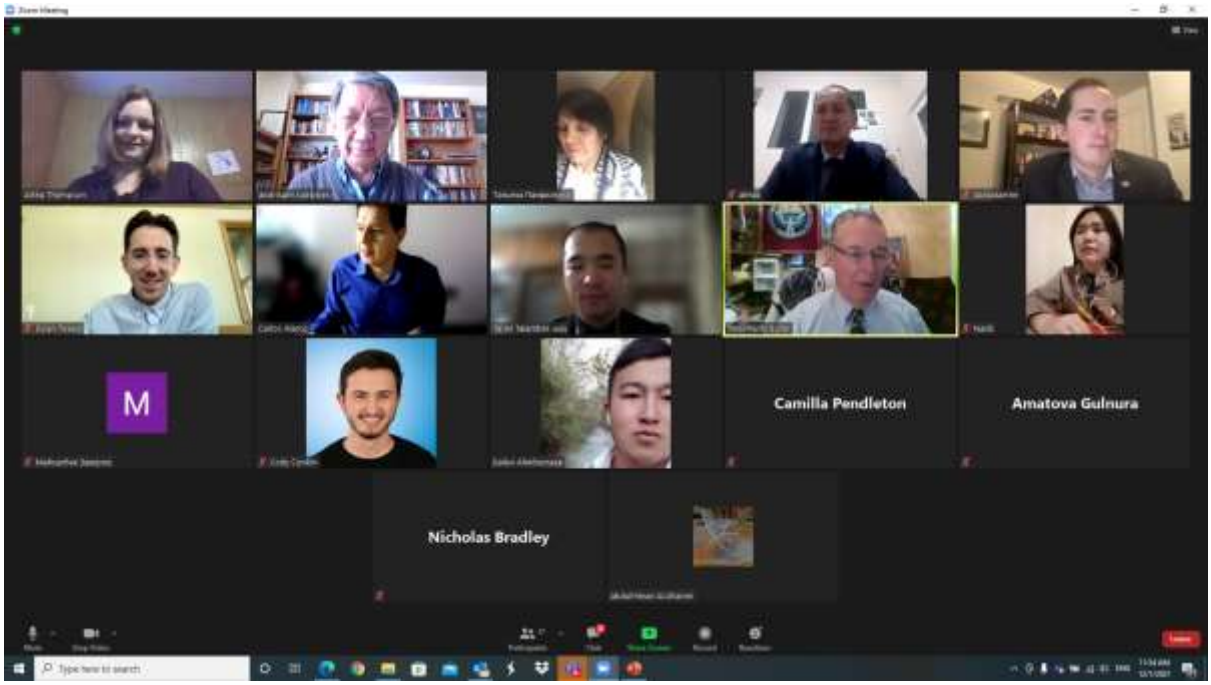
My contribution to the celebration of International Mountain Day

On December 1, 2021, our combined team of students and teachers, from the Osh Technological University in the Kyrgyz Republic and Utah Valley University in the United States of America, held the celebration event dedicated to the International Mountain Day (IMD). December 11 was approved as International Mountain Day by the UN General Assembly in 2002 in order to raise the issues of mountain communities and developing high mountain areas in accordance with the goals of sustainable development. The theme of the 2021 International Mountain Day was defined as the contribution of tourism to the sustainable development of mountain regions.



Participants of the event on December 1, 2022 at Utah Valley University

All those gathered in the conference hall had a direct relationship to this event due to their place of residence. And it so happened that, on December 1, we celebrated this holiday in a circle of like-minded people.

This meeting was held a little earlier than the official day, as usually the day of the official celebration coincides with the start of the student's final examinations. The IMD event celebration united people who know about the mountains firsthand. Events of this rank have been held annually at Utah Valley University since 2010, while Osh Technological University has been periodically participating in them since 2012.

The initiators of such meetings and the ideological inspirers from the Utah Valley University (UVU) are Dr. Rusty Butler, who was also the main speaker during this event, and Dr. Abdrisaev Baktybek, who teaches at the same university, for which we are sincerely grateful to them both. I was impressed by the work of Alitha Thompson, who is the vice-president of the student association Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF). UIMF puts a lot of effort

into the development of the student community, with an emphasis on promoting the problem and goals of the sustainable development of mountain communities.

Alitha Thompson moderated the event

Alitha and her fellow students organized this event as a student initiative in which teachers can also participate on an equal basis with students. However, the students are given a leading role in it so that they can practically learn to cooperate and teach each other in discussing the pressing problems of mountain communities. At UVU such a methodology was developed long ago and is successfully used for the educational process. It became a good opportunity for teachers and students of OshTU to master this methodology.

This year, at the event, we met with students from different countries, who each told in their own language, about the country in which they live. It was interesting to listen to the students from mountain communities, for example, Byan Alghanmi from Saudi Arabia or Cody Conklin, who, although he represented the US State of Virginia, shared during his speech the results of research work with a comparative analysis of the impact of the COVID epidemic on the state of tourism in Utah and in Austria.

The first word was given to Dr. Rusty Butler, a man who has been engaged in uniting our countries for a very long time. He has had great success in this endeavor. For a very long time, he was Vice President for International Relations at UVU. His report reflected the moments of cooperation of UVU with various universities and official structures of the Russian Federation, which began from the moment of his appointment as the Honorary Consul of Russia in the State of Utah. It was interesting to listen to his speech on the visits of many important officials from Russia and other countries, which he organized, and how they contributed to the development of tourism in Utah. Therefore, it was not surprising for me to learn that Dr. Butler is currently the main UN representative of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences.

Dr. Rusty Butler speaks about mountain tourism in Utah

Each of the participants in our meeting spoke about their country. It was very important for me as a teacher and mentor to prepare my own student at the Osh Technological University, Abibillayev Bayel, to contribute to the collective efforts of the united student group. Together with Maysalbek Zakirov and their classmates, they prepared a capacious and informative video clip showing the city of Osh for this day as one of the oldest cities in the Central Asian region, which has many great tourist attractions.

Abibillaev Bayel speaks about tourism in Kyrgyzstan

Abibillaev Bayel also perfectly coped with his task as a speaker from OshTU, who spoke about the importance of tourism for the economic development of both the Kyrgyz Republic and the city of Osh.

Overall, the celebration of International Mountain Day proved to be a success, when a joint team from Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic showed how an educational program can mobilize students for joint practical actions demonstrating the importance of tourism for sustainable development of mountain regions.

Tatiana Panfilenko, OshTU faculty