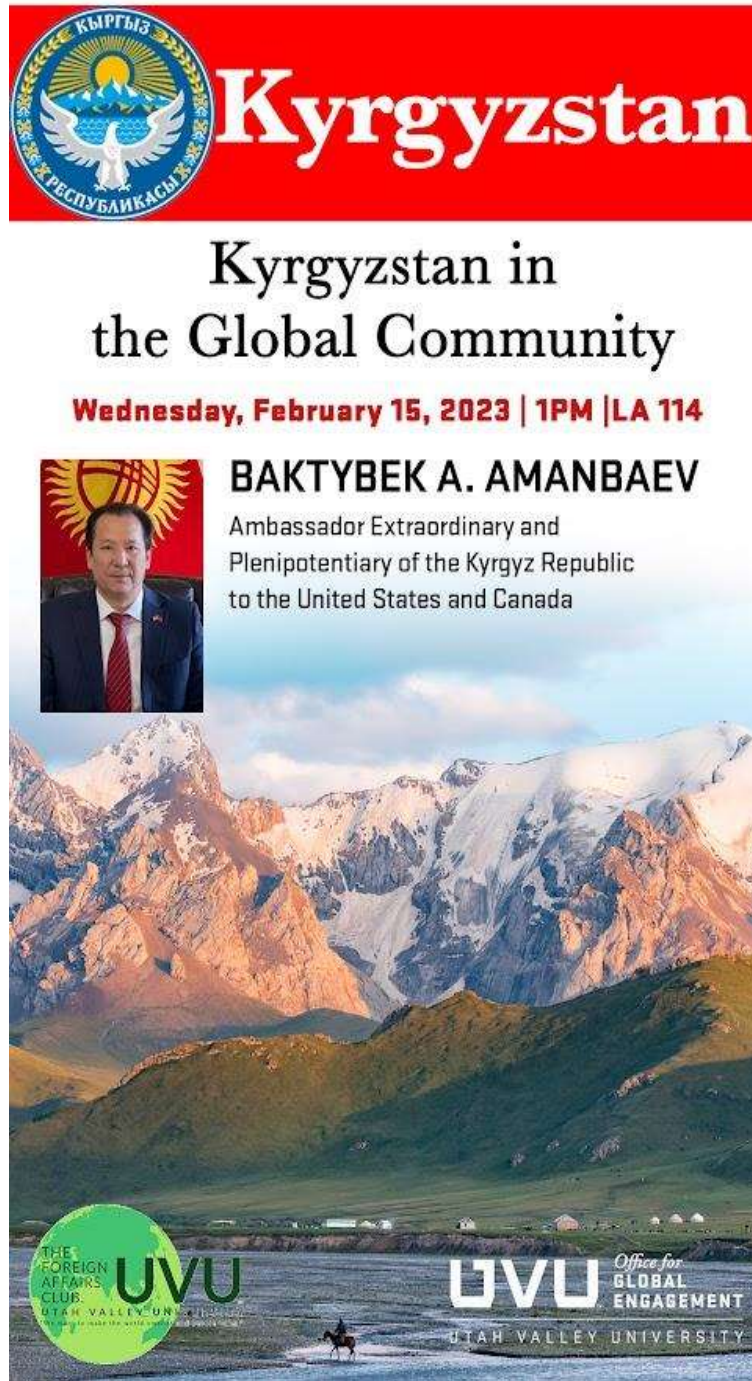


# Lessons with the Kyrgyz Ambassador



*Poster Promoting the event with Ambassador Amanbaev*

On February 14th and 15th 2023, UIMF leadership, under the direction of UVU's Foreign Affairs Club, with support from members: Chandler Davis, Rusden Scott, Carter Darger, Winnie Jada, and Nikki Smith partnered with UVU's Office for Global Engagement and Intercultural

Exchange to host His Excellency Baktybek A. Amanbaev, The Kyrgyz ambassador to the US and Canada. The Foreign Affairs Club engages students on issues relating to international relations. As a student club Foreign Affairs provides opportunities for students like me to be involved in different activities through the Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model. SEL places focus on providing students hands-on experience in their field of study, and makes my education feel more practical since I can see how I may apply it after graduating. Foreign Affairs is a member of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU which advocates for sustainable mountain development in the State of Utah and globally.



*Meeting between UIMF leadership and Ambassador Amanbaev*

On the 14th, UIMF was able to meet privately with Ambassador Amanbaev and his team. During this time, we had the opportunity to get some of his personal opinions on Kyrgyzstan's situation in the international community. I was impressed by the ambassador's optimism. Focusing on international relations can often be a disheartening experience. The conflicting interests of

different states often makes it feel impossible to make changes. The perspective that the ambassador seemed to bring was one that was more focused on what needs to be done rather than getting bogged down with the obstacles that exist.

In addition to the ambassador's perspective, I gained new insight into some customs when meeting ambassadors. My previous experience working in politics has taught me to overdress rather than underdress. After meeting the ambassador, I was informed that it is customary to underdress the first time you meet an ambassador. Thankfully this did not ruin the relationship between UIMF and the ambassador, but it was embarrassing to learn I had made a mistake.

Moving into the publicly accessible part of the event, my responsibilities shifted to more of the technical side. UIMF documents all of our major events to provide a guide for future students trying to organize similar events. My job was to create video recordings of the events and ensure that the live streams we used for certain meetings were functional.

For the most part, this went off without a hitch. We had done practice runs for many of the events to ensure that everyone knew what was supposed to happen. Thanks to our practice runs of the event, I was able to solve an issue with the microphone we were using for the meeting we hosted with the ambassador and Joe Pitts, a former congressman from Pennsylvania.



*Meeting between Ambassador Amanbaev, Congressman Pitts, and UIMF members*

One of the longer running projects of UIMF has been working with OSH Technological University in Kyrgyzstan to help establish a Rotaract club there. After the meeting with Congressman Pitts we convened a meeting with the ambassador and UVU staff to discuss this. Of particular interest was establishing an exchange program for UVU and OSH students so we can teach and learn from each other. This meeting went exceptionally well as the ambassador saw the value of Rotaract clubs and expressed a desire to offer support for this effort.



*Rotaractors and UVU faculty advocating for Rotaract support to Ambassador Amanbaev*

Hosting Ambassador Amanbaev will doubtlessly be one of the highlights of my education at UVU. Doing this through SEL allowed me to learn a lot about what it takes to host an event like this. Furthermore, it has given a chance to make real changes in the world through things like the advocacy for Rotaract clubs. I chose to study politics because I want to make the world a better place. This event showed me not only how I can do that with my degree, but allowed me to do it while earning my degree.

**McKay Brooks, Rotaract Vice President**