

# KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

*Quarterly Newsletter, December 2021*



Zana Cena, Duke Law '21

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# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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As 2021 comes to an end, we are looking back at some of the highlights that made KAEF's year. From KAEF's virtual fundraiser 'Kosovo's Future Begins with Education' to its 'Impact Evaluation,' the 2022-2023 recruitment cycle, and the graduation of KAEF fellows, among others, 2021 was marked by activities which continued to promote the program as an impactful and transformative opportunity for talented Kosovars with potential to drive Kosovo's future.

**February 17th** - A matching gift challenge by an anonymous donor is announced in honor of Kosovo's 13th Anniversary of Independence

**March** - To assess the program's impact on its 17th year of operation, 'KAEF Impact Evaluation' commences

**April/July** - KAEF's 2022-2023 recruitment cycle launches

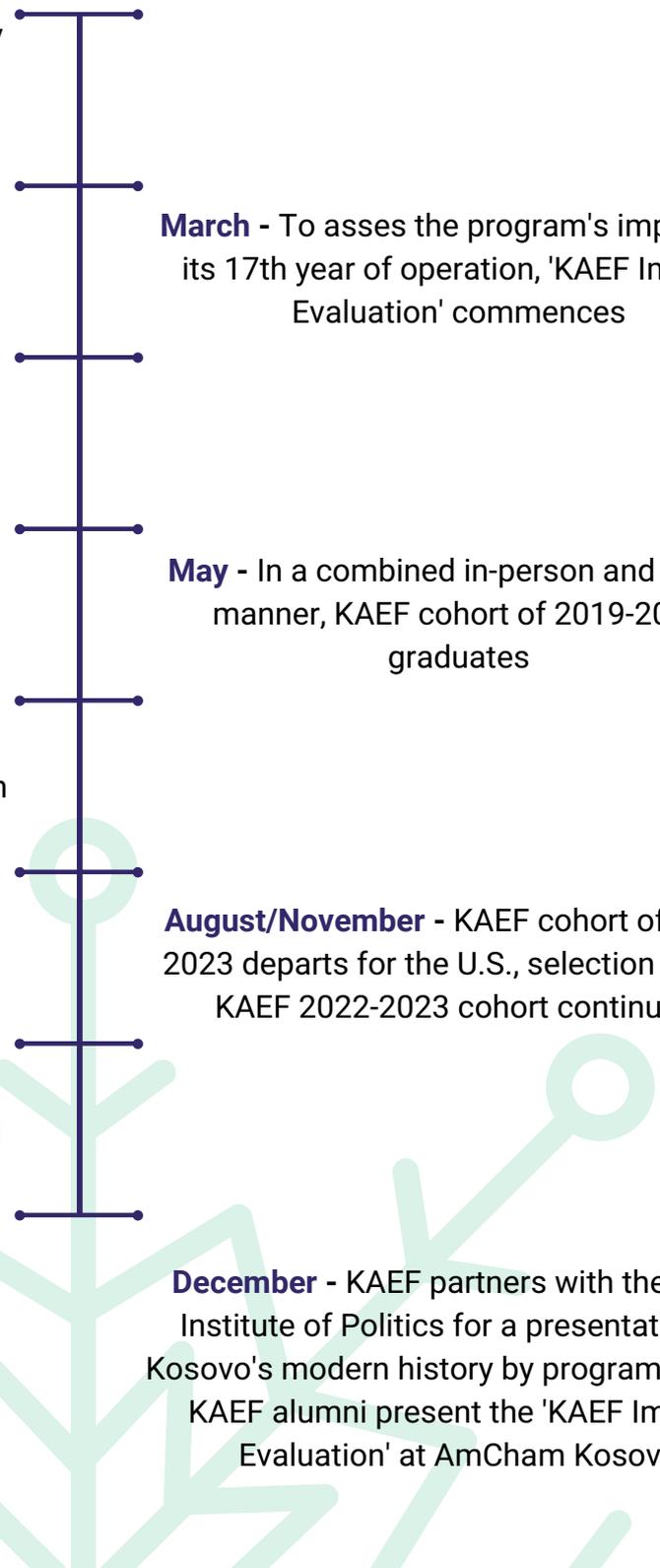
**May** - In a combined in-person and virtual manner, KAEF cohort of 2019-2021 graduates

**July 4th** - A matching gift challenge by KFC Kosova is announced in honor of U.S.'s 245th Anniversary of Independence

**August/November** - KAEF cohort of 2021-2023 departs for the U.S., selection for the KAEF 2022-2023 cohort continues

**November** - KAEF alumni mark the Global Entrepreneurship Week and the International Education Week

**December** - KAEF partners with the Dole Institute of Politics for a presentation on Kosovo's modern history by program alumni; KAEF alumni present the 'KAEF Impact Evaluation' at AmCham Kosovo



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# GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK 2021

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Global Entrepreneurship Week 2021 was marked during the week of November 8-14. In Kosovo, the Global Entrepreneurship Week saw over 70 activities, being implemented by 50 partner organizations and institutions, including KAEF. The Global Entrepreneurship Week is made possible by the Innovation Centre Kosovo (ICK), which is the official host of the week and partner of the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN).

This year's themes were: ecosystems, education, inclusion, and policy. To mark the occasion, KAEF organized a panel around the topic of 'The Future of Work: Reconsidering Business,' with panelists including alumni Artrin Bajrami, Emira Ajeti, and committee member and CEO at Starlabs and Shkolla Digjitale, Hana Qerimi. The panel was moderated by alumnus Festim Bejtullahu. During this event, the panelists shared their thoughts on the 4th industrial revolution, Kosovo and globalization, the future of work, and opportunities in Kosovo. **The event was livestreamed on Facebook, and can be viewed [here](#).**

*Global Entrepreneurship Week is a massive campaign to celebrate and empower entrepreneurs in every country and community around the world – especially those individuals who face structural barriers or may have never considered the idea of launching their own startup. Each November, 10 million people take part in tens of thousands of activities, competitions and events that inspire them to act and provide them with the knowledge, experience and connections they need to succeed.*



From left to right: Artrin Bajrami, Emira Ajeti, Festim Bejtullahu

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# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK 2021

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Following the Global Entrepreneurship Week 2021, KAEF alumni also marked the International Education Week (IEW) by sharing their thoughts and experiences on the topic of 'Active Citizenship in a Digital World.' This virtual event, with panelists spread across two time zones, touched upon today's digital platforms and ways on how young people can continue to advocate for issues facing their communities and be active citizens, even in a post-COVID-19 world. The panel was moderated by YES alumna Mjellma Vula, and panelists included Annea Hapçiu (KAEF), Florent Kuçi (Community College Initiative Program), Jordan Hattar (Fulbright U.S. Student Program), Vesa Bashota (Fulbright Foreign Student Program), and Yllza Hoti (YES, KAEF). **The event was livestreamed on Facebook, and can be viewed [here](#).**



## All-Alumni Panel: *Active Citizenship in a Digital World*

**November 16, 2021, 5:30 PM Prishtina Time**

Join us for our all-alumni panel with Annea Hapçiu (Kosovo American Education Fund), Florent Kuci (Community College Initiative Program), Jordan Hattar (Fulbright US Student Program), Vesa Bashota (Fulbright Foreign Student Program), and Yllza Hoti (Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Program). The panel will be moderated by YES alumna Mjellma Vula.



International  
Education  
Week

*International Education Week, November 15-19, 2021, is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. This joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education is part of our efforts to promote programs that prepare Americans for a global environment and attract future leaders from abroad to study, learn, and exchange experiences.*

# Duke Law - 2021 LLM Convocation Ceremony

**Editor's note** - Congratulations to Zana Cena, who graduated from Duke Law in December 2021. As a recent graduate, we made sure to ask Zana about her decision to pursue her graduate studies through KAEF, and what's next for her.

*Zana Cena (LLM, Duke University '21) - "One of my best decisions so far has been to pursue an LLM degree in the United States, to further enhance my studies and my professional development. Studying at Duke Law School has helped me tremendously to narrow down my interest in the legal profession. The business law courses were uniquely designed to be a mix between doctrinal and skill oriented, which I thoroughly enjoyed. In some courses I enrolled, the assignments were very close to legal tasks that are given in a law firm, which is an astounding experience to have as a student, because it prepares you for a legal career. In addition, besides the courses, another rewarding thing about Duke Law is the legal network that is available to its students and alumni. Now that I graduated, I am thrilled to put into practice the legal skills I have gained during my LLM."*



Zana Cena (first row, fourth from the left) at the Duke Law - 2021 Convocation Ceremony

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## UPDATES FROM KAEF FELLOWS

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**Editor's note** - Before we conclude the year, we made sure to check-in with our on-program fellows and see how their U.S. experience is going thus far. See what Anyla, Bardh, Dren, Fjolla, and Rron had to share with us.



**Anyla Rexhepi** (MBA, Temple University '21) - "Since graduating from Temple University in May 2021, I've been working in Brand Management at a CPG company. This has been a unique opportunity for me to further develop my skillset and be able to put to use the knowledge I acquired during my two-year MBA program. I believe the opportunity to work in the United States has been invaluable, and that I've been fortunate to experience the work culture in the U.S. In my current role as a brand associate, I've had great exposure to multiple departments in the organization and have been working on numerous high-profile projects for the company and top retailers in the U.S. Growing up in a family with a long business tradition, I've developed an understanding of the impact of brand awareness, and it has been great to be able to work in that sector in the U.S."

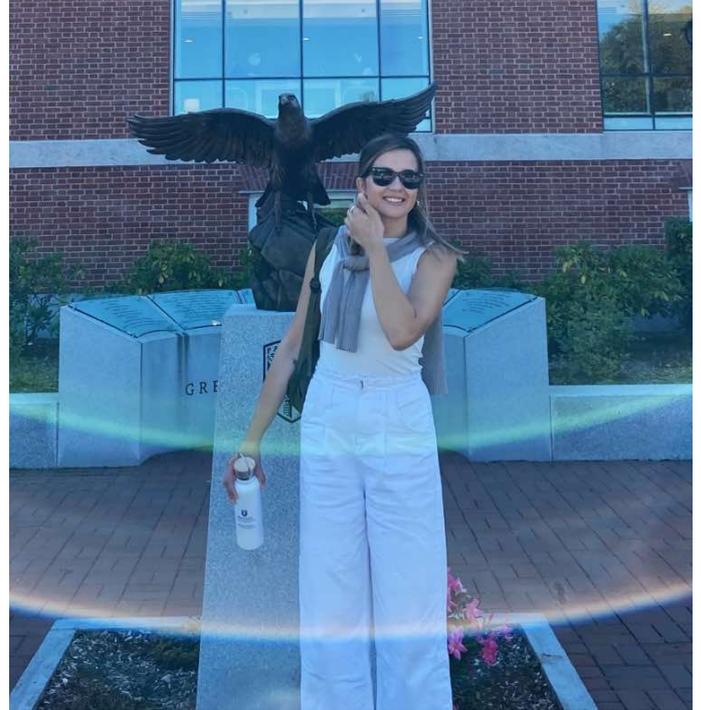
**Bardh Rushiti** (AI, RIT '23) - "The journey thus far has been nothing less than thrilling. In the first weeks, I struggled with technical terms, but eventually, with practice and help from others I picked it up. I am very satisfied with how everything came about this first semester. The professors were impeccable, the material and lectures were well-constructed and last, but not least, the willingness of the academic staff to help students grow was relentless. So far, I am very pleased with RIT as my choice to pursue graduate studies, and I am proud of how much I have grown."

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**Dren Krasniqi** (MBA, Brandeis University '23) - "Brandeis International Business School offers a rigorous educational experience in the context of an inclusive, caring campus environment. Students and faculty are warm, engaging, and will go out of their way to make you feel that Brandeis is your home. Classes are interactive, informal and typically small, allowing students to truly get to know their professors and one another. At the same time, Brandeis International Business School has a global feel, as I got the chance to meet classmates and faculty from more than 20 nations."

**Fjolla Azemi** (MBA, Bentley University '23) - "As my first semester at Bentley University is already done, I cannot help but think what an enlightening experience it is to study Business Analytics amongst world published mentors. The school offers a cohort-based learning experience structured around teamwork and personalized coaching at the same time. Through courses, training, and events, I learned about modern data science, analytical tools and went through cutting-edge learning materials. Moreover, Bentley's diverse student scene has helped me get a global perspective and broadened my view. I have met many international friends from cultures I share so much with but differ at the same time. Looking forward to what's in store for the next semesters. Lot's of studying ahead that is for sure!"

## UPDATES FROM KAEF FELLOWS



**Rron Ismajli** (MBA, UNC-Chapel Hill '23) - "My MBA experience at Kenan-Flagler Business School (University of North Carolina) during the first semester has been one of the most interesting periods of my life. While challenges such as settling and adapting to this new environment proved overwhelming at times, they have also instilled valuable lessons in me in an individual as well as a professional level. Being one of the oldest public institutions in United States, UNC truly embodies American values of fostering relationships, questioning, and debating important concepts in a relaxed setting while also toiling when demanded. Indeed, striving for greatness is a mantra that every student and alumnus (from 11th U.S. President Polk to basketball legend Michael Jordan) lives by. When recalling my encounters, I believe that the classroom is the arena where I have gained the most. Our renowned faculty members and diverse fellow graduate colleagues have made discussions pleasant and relatable to practical business problems faced both here and Kosovo. Outside of the program, the college social life has also been an enriching aspect to my experience. Sporting events such as football and basketball as well as occasions such as honoring Veterans showcase lasting traditions and the many ways of bonding with your school well beyond the two years spent here. Finally, I have also used my periods of break to travel across the country and discover other variations of the American culture. Needless to say, all of this would not have been possible without the Kosovo American Education Fund who provided this opportunity to me and many other young Kosovars throughout the years. *Thank you KAEF!*"

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# THE MODERN HISTORY OF KOSOVO WITH THE DOLE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

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On December 1, KAEF alumni Pleurat Halili and Zana Zeqiri Rudi participated in an event hosted by the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics on the Modern History of Kosovo. Pleurat, a graduate of Columbia SIPA, is an entrepreneur and CEO of Novus Consulting, a pioneer firm in providing IT solutions, and the founder of Iajmi.net, one of the leading online media outlets for the Albanian-speaking audience. Zana, a graduate of Harvard Kennedy School, served as the first Ambassador of Kosovo to Panama and went on to become Kosovo's Ambassador to Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Belize, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Guyana. The event was centered on the difficulties and optimism that have shaped Kosovo's past, present, and future, as well as Senator Dole's critical role in rallying support for Kosovo on its path to freedom. Senator Dole, who passed away on December 5, had shared a personal note which also read, "to all my friends in Kosova, I keep you in my heart, always."

*The KAEF community expresses its deepest condolences to the Dole family, and will forever be thankful to Senator Dole's unwavering support to Kosovo and its people.*

**[Click here to watch a recording of the event on YouTube.](#)**

## THE MODERN HISTORY OF KOSOVO: Past, Present, and Future

December 1, 2021 | 11 a.m. CST

### **Pleurat Halili**

Chief Executive Officer  
Novus

### **Zana Zeqiri Rudi**

Senior Career Diplomat  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo

### **Gjeni Shporta**

Country Representative for Kosovo  
American Councils for International Education

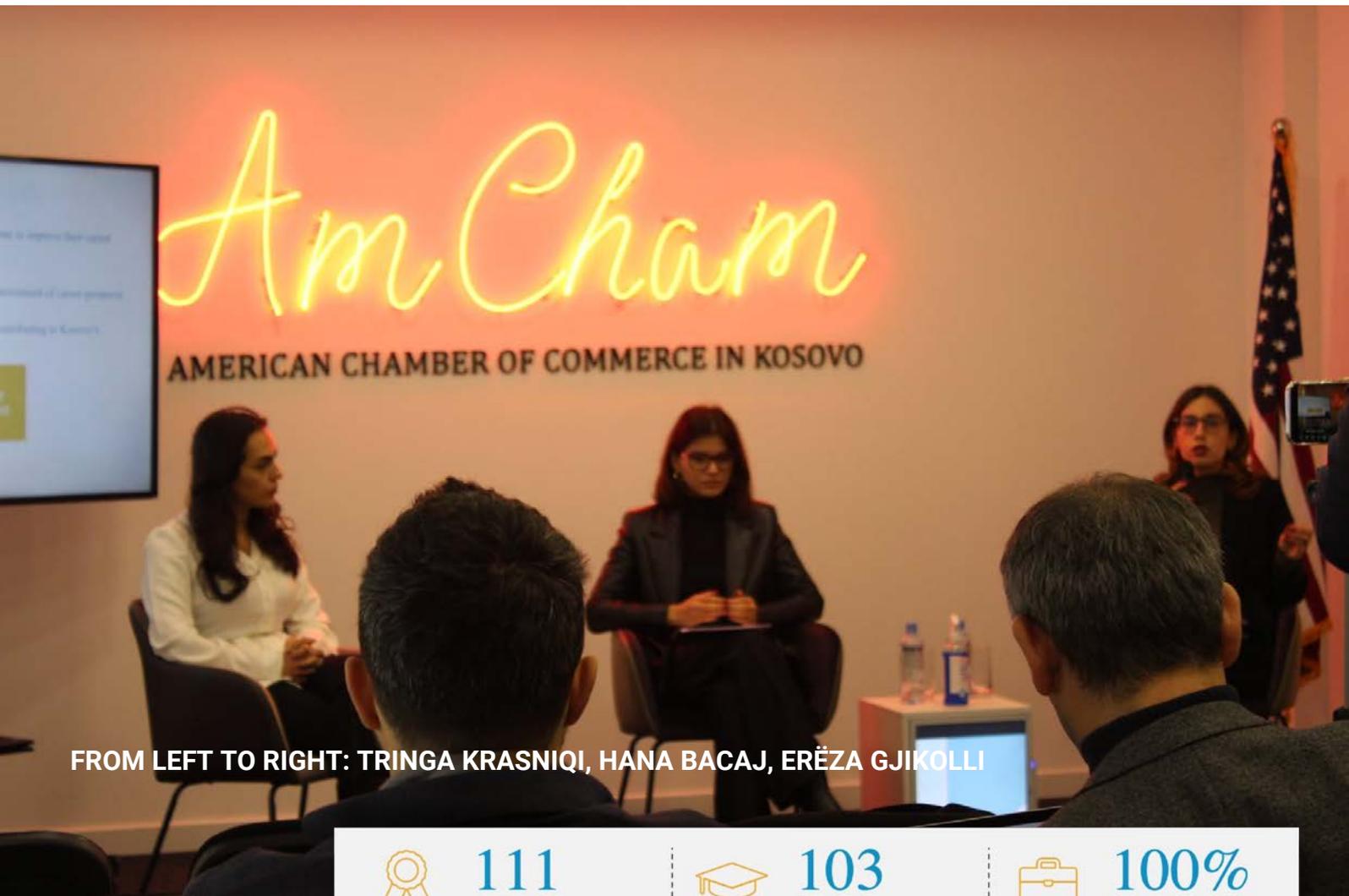


**ROBERT J. DOLE  
INSTITUTE OF POLITICS**  
The University of Kansas

This program was made possible by the Jim Xhema Opportunity Fund.

# KAEF IMPACT EVALUATION PRESENTATION

On December 22, KAEF alumni Erëza Gjikolli, Hana Bacaj, and Tringa Krasniqi presented the 'KAEF Impact Evaluation' at an in-person event at AmCham Kosovo. Erëza Gjikolli, a graduate of Bentley University, is a Program Development Supervisor at TEB Kosovo, Hana Bacaj, a graduate of Vanderbilt University, is a National Research Expert for VET at Lux-Development, and Tringa Krasniqi, a graduate of George Washington University, is a Founder at Ivy Journey. The alumni presented the evaluation in three main parts, its relevance, impact, and sustainability. **The event was livestreamed on Facebook, and can be viewed [here](#).**



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: TRINGA KRASNIQI, HANA BACAJ, ERËZA GJIKOLLI



KAEF Impact Evaluation: KAEF in Numbers

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# KOSOVO'S FUTURE BEGINS WITH EDUCATION

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*"Believe you can, and you're halfway there."*

*Theodore Roosevelt*

## A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR CAMPAIGN DONORS!



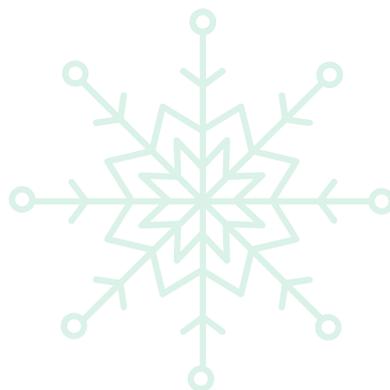
**Coca-Cola HBC**  
Kosovo



*ProCredit Bank*



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!





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CONTACT:

[ks@americancouncils.org](mailto:ks@americancouncils.org)  
52 Rexhep Luci Street, 2nd Floor  
10000 Prishtina, Kosovo

