

KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

Quarterly Newsletter, June 2021



*Robert Ejupi
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill '21*

2022/23 PROGRAM RECRUITMENT CYCLE

KAEF completed another successful cycle of recruitment! This year, we hosted four virtual informative sessions, in partnership with American Advising Center and UP-Qendra per Zhvillim te Karrieres, where interested applicants had the opportunity to get first-hand information on the application process. For the first time this year, we also held two field-specific informative sessions, one for law students and one dedicated to the students of engineering and computer science.

The deadline for the 2022/23 U.S. Based and Online application for the KAEF Graduate Fellowship Program is coming up! Make sure to submit your applications by Monday, July 12, 2021, until 11:59 PM (EST).

What is the Selection Committee Looking For?

01/02	03/04	05/06
Academic History and Awards	Match with the Program Goals	A Clear Professional Plan
Professional Experience	Recommendation Letters	Including a Return to Kosova

KAEF applicants must convincingly demonstrate how their participation in the program will contribute to the economic development of Kosova.

Participants: Gjeni, America... (Co-host, me), Alba - KAEF (Host), Enkele Rama, Altina Bytyqi, Arber Haziri, Ardita Uka, Avdyli Shala, behlul rashiti, Eni Azemi, Eris Lushtaku, Enis Meshi, Festim, Florentina Dermaku.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE 2022/23 KAEF COHORT

TOEFL exams for the tier 1 candidates.	September 2021
Interview with the U.S. Selection Committee.	September 2021
Tier 2 semi-finalists identified.	October 2021
GRE/GMAT Exams for the tier 2 semi-finalists.	October/November 2021
KAEF Finalists identified.	January 2022

KOSOVO'S FUTURE BEGINS WITH EDUCATION

Last October, we launched the "Kosovo's Future Begins with Education" campaign, with the goal of raising \$50,000 to secure the tuition costs for the next cohort of KAEF fellows. Thanks to 73 generous individuals and companies, our campaign has reached over 60% of its goal. As we look ahead to the future, the need for quality education and helping our youth gain a foothold in a rapidly changing economy has become even stronger. KAEF continuously addresses this issue and your support holds a crucial place in this effort.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR CAMPAIGN DONORS!

In a long-awaited announcement, we are thrilled to announce a new partnership agreement with **Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company**. The funds received from this agreement will directly support KAEF's ongoing campaign "Kosovo's Future Begins with Education." As KAEF enters its 16th year of operation, we are grateful to enjoy the trust and support of leading global companies such as Coca-Cola HBC. Thank you for making a difference for our youth and giving power to education!

"Coca-Cola HBC is part of Kosovo community for more than 15 years. As a company we are carefully listening local relevant needs and together with our partners we aim to address these social issues. Youth empowerment and education presents one of our key community priorities. Just through our flagship project Youth Empowered we have already motivated 1000 young people in Kosovo to further develop their careers. We are very happy for the opportunity to partner with KAEF and to contribute on fostering our youth's professional and personal growth, thus we are looking forwards to this impactful partnership!"



Coca-Cola HBC
Kosovo



ProCredit Bank



ANNOUNCING A STAR-SPANGLED CHALLENGE



This #4thofJuly
double your impact!
Donate today!

The #4thofJuly matching gift challenge has been generously provided by KFC Kosova

This Fourth of July marks United States' 245th Independence Day!

On the occasion of this important date, we have some exciting news to share! Thanks to the generosity of our longtime friend [KFC KOSOVA](#), we have launched a matching gift challenge in support of our "Kosovo's Future Begins with Education" campaign. Throughout the month, your donation will be matched for up to \$950.

As one of the founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, has said "An investment in education pays the best returns."

Kosovo's youth is its engine in economic development and your support is needed, more than ever, to help them get the education they deserve. Join our community of supporters by doubling your impact today!

CELEBRATING CLASS OF 2021



Festim Bejtullahu and his classmates at the University of San Francisco graduation ceremony.



Festim Bejtullahu
MBA, University of San Francisco



Ereza Gjikoili
Accounting Analytics, Bentley University

CELEBRATING CLASS OF 2021



Anyla Rexhepi
MBA, Temple University



Art Raifi
MBA, Brandeis University



Egzon Osmani
Financial Analytics, Bentley University



Robert Ejupi
MBA, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: EREZA GJIKOLLI

Editor's note - Erëza Gjikolli is one of the newest alumni to join the 100+ KAEF alumni community. Through KAEF, Erëza graduated with an MS in Accounting Analytics at Bentley University as well as completed a graduate certificate in Business Analytics. During her studies, Erëza was also elected as the Graduate Student Association's (GSA) President at her university. She is currently working as the Program Development Supervisor at TEB Kosovo.

Why did you choose to study Accounting Analytics and what made you want to apply to KAEF?

From a very young age, I have known I would have a role in helping businesses grow. I have always been interested in knowing the inner workings of a well-established enterprise, what it takes for a company to succeed and the attributes of a good business plan. With my experience in startup advisory and my interest, I realized that in order to understand the business better – one would have to be able to speak the language of business a.k.a. accounting. So, accounting paired with new digital tools and the limitless amount of data is what I considered as having an edge and really establishing myself. My decision to apply to KAEF was very simple – I wanted to have an unparalleled learning experience in a

prestigious institute as well as exposure to a cultural melting pot that is the United States.

What was the defining moment from your program experience and how did it shape you?

I cannot seem to pinpoint this at one single moment – it was more of a blend of between days and events. From the moment I received the email that I was admitted to the program, to the day I went to my first class, my first internship interview, my first rejection email, my first and only whale-watching cruise, my first midterm, my first late assignment and to the day I graduated, these events were building the version I am today. I have come back home with a plethora of skills and experiences that I get to share with my community each day.





Erëza with her friends during fall foliage in New Hampshire.

What was the most challenging aspect of your time at Bentley? What was the most rewarding?

The biggest adjustment that I had to make while at Bentley was coming back to Kosovo and juggling between a full-time job and a 6-hour time difference. Although it was tiring at first, with a lot of commitment, planning, and several calendars (both print and digital), the transition became easier and classes more manageable. It just goes to show that we can achieve anything we put our minds to!

As per rewarding, being elected as the Graduate Student Association's (GSA) President really changed my experience at Bentley. Through the countless events with students, faculty, and external partners, I was able to share experiences, thoughts, and ideas with citizens of the world (from Peru to China). I tried new types of food, challenged myself into trying new activities, and just stepped out of my comfort zone. Most importantly, through the GSA, I forged connections and friendships that will last me a lifetime!

"My decision to apply to KAEF was very simple - I wanted to have an unparalleled learning experience in a prestigious institute as well as exposure to a cultural melting pot that is the United States."



Whale watching for the first time in Boston, Massachusetts.



What is your advice to current and future fellows?

Don't be afraid to ask a lot of questions. When in doubt about anything (and I do mean ANYTHING), ask away. There are so many people you can reach out to (i.e., alumni for the application process) and resources you could refer to that can make ALL aspects of the application and actual graduate school easier.

What can you tell us about your future plans and the work you will be doing now that you are here in Kosovo?

Currently, my work is centered around providing disadvantaged businesses easier access to finance and non-financial services. As I learn more about the business ecosystem in Kosovo, in the future, I hope to establish my own advisory firm with a diverse roster of experts to help companies identify their barriers and devise creative solutions that address them.



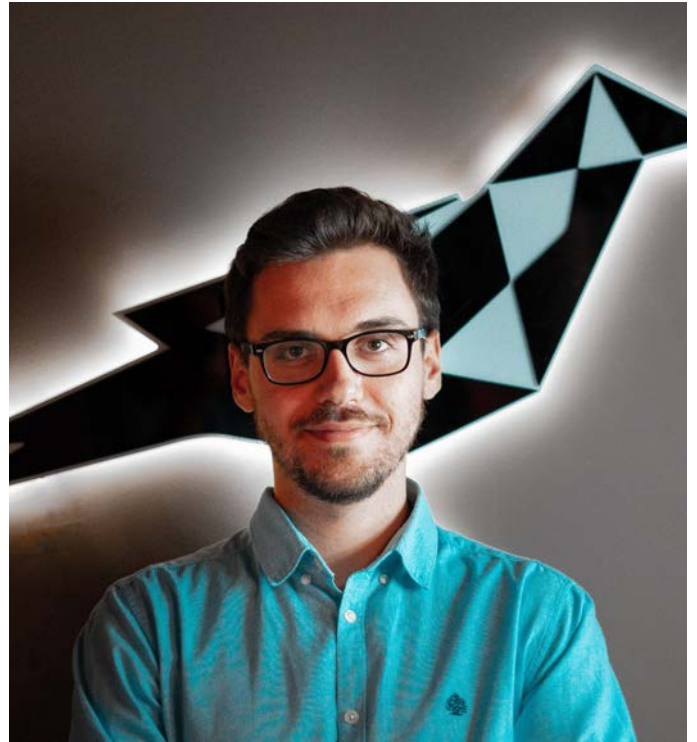
2021 Graduation Ceremony at Bentley University.

ALUMNI BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: ART RAIFI

Driving Economic Development Through Entrepreneurship

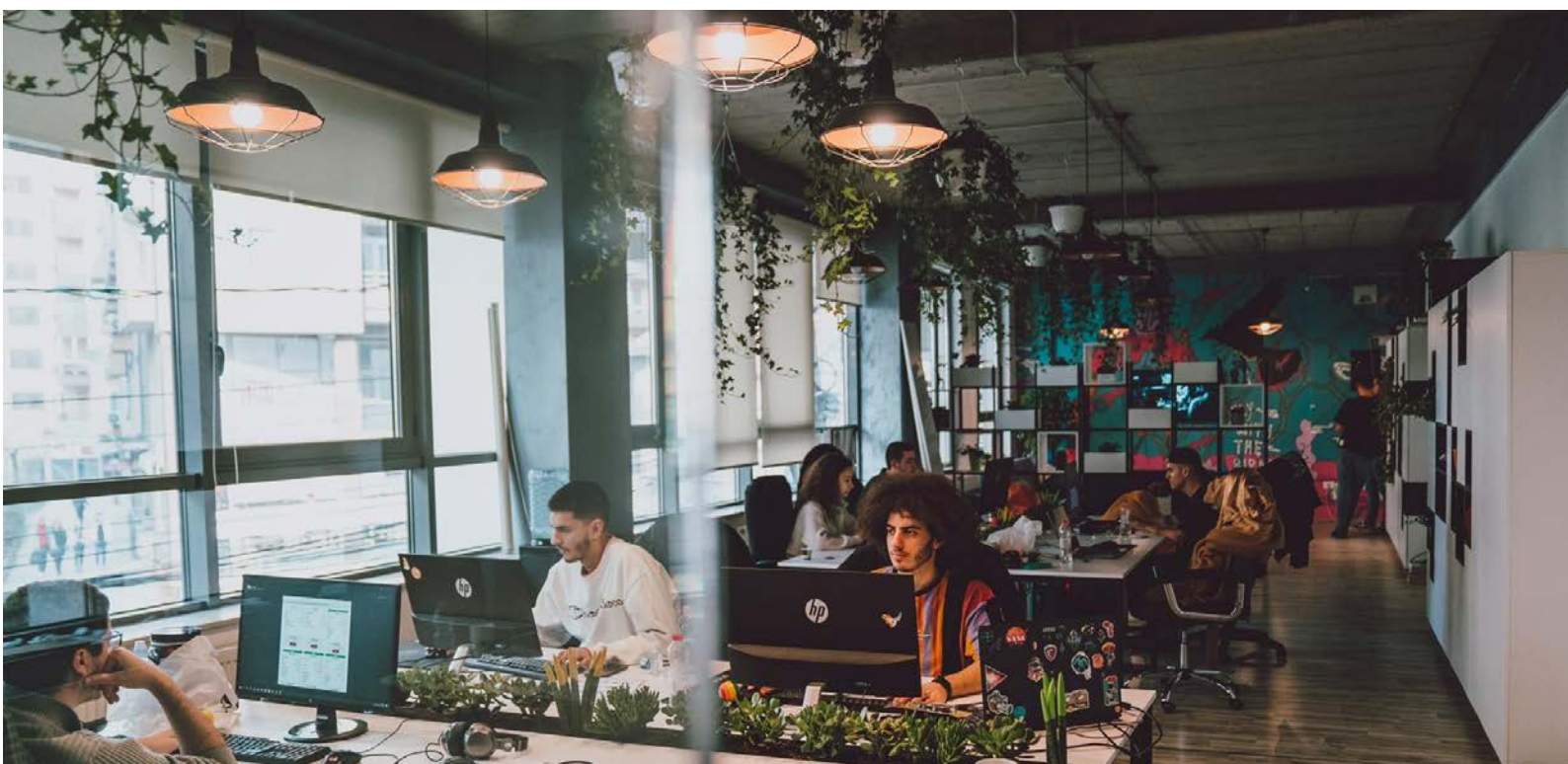
Art Raifi graduated with an MBA from Brandeis University in the Spring of this year. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Art decided to return to Kosovo to focus on growing his digital agency, while also attending online classes at Brandeis University. Despite the challenges faced, Art has managed to grow his team locally and expand services internationally.

Today, Art is the Chief Executive Officer at Black Bird Marketing.



Black Bird Marketing is a full-service digital agency focused on content creation, digital strategy, and UI/UX. Black Bird works for leading corporations in Kosovo and has moved into international markets by developing websites, apps, and digital strategies for startups in the U.S., Switzerland, Germany, Poland, and the U.K. Our vision is to partner up with the world's leading brands to elevate their digital presence and help them reach their business objectives.

As of today, Black Bird Marketing employs 15 young creatives specialized across digital marketing disciplines, graphic design, as well as web and app development.





Learn more: kaef-online.org

To support our program and latest initiative, please visit:
<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/kaefonline>

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