

KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

Quarterly Newsletter, March 2021



Anyla Rexhepi, Temple University '21

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR CAMPAIGN DONORS!

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. We are delighted to say that our community of supporters did not let us down. Their loyalty has shone through, and it is due to their commitment to education and our cause that our campaign is going strong. Thanks to 68 generous individuals and companies, our campaign has reached **50% of its goal**.

On February 17th, in honor of Kosovo's 13th anniversary of independence, we launched a matching gift challenge supported by a \$3,000 pledge from anonymous donors. In a matter of three weeks, we surpassed that goal by raising \$3,530! Gifts ranged from \$15 to \$500 and came from places near (Prishtina) and far (Detroit).

We would like to thank all of our donors, large and small, including dedicated alumni, local and international KAEF friends, and generous corporate sponsors. Your donations have allowed us to dream BIG about how we can extend our reach and provide quality education to more promising students in Kosovo. As we are prepare to launch the 2022/23 KAEF fellowship call, we hope more of you will consider joining our campaign and help us cross the finish line.



"The economic development and the overall wellbeing of our citizens are closely linked to quality education, therefore KOSTT remains committed to empowering the younger generations of our country through education and development opportunities in specialised, prestigious programs. Investing in education means investing in Kosovo's bright future." -
Mustafë Hasani, Chief Executive Officer of KOSTT



THE 2022/23 KAEF FELLOWSHIP LAUNCH



The application for the 2022/23 academic year will open on April 5, 2021

The KAEF Scholarship supports exceptional young students and professionals for graduate study in the United States through a fully-funded scholarship and professional development opportunities. This year the program will open its 17th application process to all eligible candidates and provide the choice of 2 distinct program paths:

Traditional U.S. Based Program: participants come to the U.S. for the duration of their 1-2 academic year programs, take part in an internship following the first year, and are eligible for post-academic professional opportunities.

Online Program: participants enrol in online degree programs from a U.S. university. Each participant maintains full-time academic program status and completes a degree within the expected duration.

Learn more about the eligibility criteria here: www.kaef-online.org/

KAEF SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Online Application
Closes July 12, 2021

Tier-1 Semi-Finalist Candidates Identified
September 2021

Official TOEFL Exams for the Tier-1 Semi-Finalist Candidates
September 2021

Tier-1 Semi-Finalists Interviewed by the U.S. Selection Committee
September 2021

Tier-2 Semi-Finalists Identified
September/October 2021

GRE/GMAT Exams for the Tier-2 Semi-Finalists
October 2021

KAEF Finalists Announced
January 2022

KAEF FELLOWS ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS

EGZON OSMANI

MS. Finance, Bentley University '21

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Most people are doubtful as to whether they should apply for the scholarship in the first place. You either think you are not good enough, or that the process is so rigorous and competitive, and you cannot make it, or that it is not fair to begin with. A normal situation for any of us to be in. Anyhow, I think you have nothing to lose from applying and I can guarantee from my personal experience that the KAEF scholarship has high integrity and that if you dedicate yourself to receiving it, you can!



ZANA CENA

Master of Law, Duke University '21

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If I could go back in time, I would tell myself to apply sooner to KAEF and take advantage of the opportunities it has to offer. Also, I would tell myself to reach out to KAEF Alumni since they have great insight and feedback. For all the new applicants, I would tell them to start early researching the degree they would like to study and the universities that offer such degrees.

A general myth that is attached to almost all scholarship programs is their selection process. However, KAEF has a highly transparent selection process for applicants, which is a very positive thing for a scholarship program to have.

INTRODUCING THE 2021-22 KAEF COHORT

The Kosovo American Education Fund is pleased to announce its 17th cohort of KAEF fellows, who will embark on their studies in Fall 2021. For our new fellows, this year marks the beginning of an exciting, transformative journey. Here are some of their thoughts and expectations about the next two years and the degrees they will pursue.

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BARDH RRUSHITI **MS. Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing every field of the industry, starting from manufacturing to healthcare to governance and everything in the middle. It is being utilized to solve many complex problems, and sometimes it does that better than us, humans.

The reason I decided to study this field is because I believe in its tremendous potential for the future, and I believe this potential can be developed from Kosovo and for Kosovo.

As a KAEF Fellow, I am confident that the journey in the US will equip me with the education, network, and expertise I need to achieve this mission.

RRON ISMAJLI **MBA, Finance**

As a consultant and recipient of the KAEF scholarship whose goal is to educate professionals aiming to return and contribute, my academic path naturally revolves around financial topics that directly affect our compact economy. To this end, the business schools in the US are the undisputed leaders as they combine technical knowledge with practical situations to develop rapidly adaptable decision-makers. As actively performing such activities warrants a global mindset exceptionally embedded in the American culture, I believe that my experience as a KAEF Fellow will be equally enriched outside the classroom.

By honing my skills under the tutelage of renowned lecturers and through peer interaction, I expect to benefit academically, professionally, and personally.



INTRODUCING THE 2021-22 KAEF COHORT



FJOLLA AZEMI
MSBA, Business Analytics

As a business intelligence enthusiast, I am thrilled to be studying Business Analytics in a country that embodies innovation and entrepreneurship in the roots of its business culture. My focus in Business Analytics comes as an intersection of my educational background in mathematics and my professional involvement. Through my studies, I was introduced to courses related to analytics, while professionally, I have had the opportunity to gain skills in working with data, statistics, and turning data into business insights. I believe that this MSBA will give me a business-focused perspective on analytics. By closely working along with peers and mentors, I would develop an industry-driven skillset.

As businesses represent the heart of economic development in Kosovo, I believe that I would have an impact on empowering and improving processes within them by creating a data-driven decision-making culture amongst leaders.

I believe an MBA can provide me with the know-how necessary to establish my own business. I understand that this career goal requires skills such as business insight, management capabilities and networking. An MBA is a perfect choice since it will equip me with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a professional business plan, finance new ventures, assess a company's value, and create a self-sustainable business. Besides, I am also looking forward to discussing my business ideas with peers I will meet along. The innovative ideas and business insights that a diverse and talented group could generate would be of tremendous value for me. Furthermore, the USA has a unique educational philosophy that stresses leadership and practical learning.

The concentration on entrepreneurial management excites me the most, as this would align with my long-term goal of starting my own business.



DREN KRASNIQI
MBA, Entrepreneurship

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS



BRIKENA AVDYLI
American University '13

Brikena Avdyli serves as the Executive Director of the Jahjaga Foundation, which works towards empowering women, youth, and other marginalized groups. Among other programs, Brikena initiated a magazine called ZA, which aims to present stories of resilience of advocates of gender equality and an e-learning platform for topics related to gender equality. She co-authored one of the first manuals on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In addition, while serving as an Advisor to the Fourth President of Kosovo, Brikena was directly engaged in organizing the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of freedom and in preparing the testimony for the demand for justice for crimes committed during the war in Kosovo, for the US House of Representatives Committee of Foreign Affairs. Before that, Brikena has worked for four years at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, supporting election management bodies in ensuring inclusive elections.



LORIK REXHEPI
George Washington University '18

Lorik Rexhepi graduated with high honors in Law from the University of York in the United Kingdom, after which he returned to Prishtina to work as a Consultant in donor-funded assistance projects. Through the KAEP scholarship, Lorik graduated from the George Washington University Law School in Washington D.C. with the highest honors, specializing in International Law.

Since 2018, he is the Head of Property Development at Eng Invest LLC, whereby he manages the overall construction and development of a commercial and residential building in Prishtina's Old Town spanning over 20,000m². Lorik also serves on the board of Engroup, which includes ENRAD - the largest radiator & heating boiler manufacturer in South-East Europe, and Eng Office LLC, the largest wholesale and retail company of HVAC systems in Kosovo. In total, Engroup employs over 250 people in Kosovo.

ALUMNI BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: RINOR GJONBALAJ

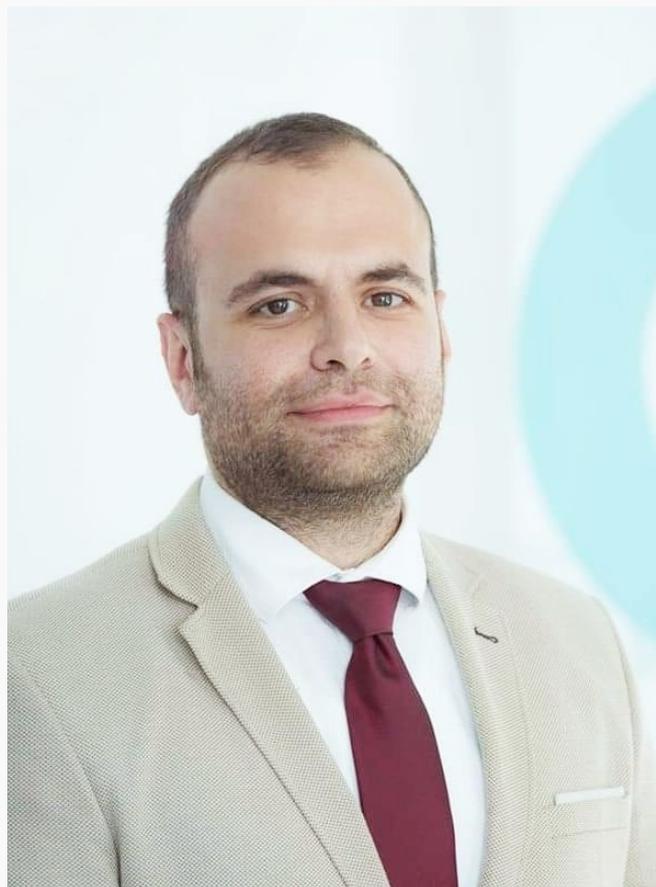
Driving Economic Development Through Finance and Entrepreneurship

Rinor Gjonbalaj graduated with an MBA in Financial Management from Temple University, Philadelphia, in 2013, where he won multiple awards in Private Equity and Investment Banking.

Upon returning to Kosovo, he joined MDA, the leading consulting company in Kosovo, as a CFO and CEO. He managed numerous technical assistance and management consulting projects. He supported more than 70 organizations in the Western Balkans, from financial institutions to manufacturers and from not-for-profit organizations to public institutions.

Rinor is also the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund (KCGF). He oversees a current portfolio of more than 240M EUR in loan guarantees given to 6.9k businesses in Kosovo that have created more than 9,400 new jobs in the country. In addition, Rinor also founded Blue Eagle Capital, a specialized alternative investment management firm pioneering private investments in Southeastern Europe.

Rinor is a very active member of the alumni community. He served as the Chairman of the Board of the KAEF Alumni Association and a member of the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF) Committee. He is a passionate advocate for education, entrepreneurship, and impact investing.



Managing Development Associates (MDA) is recognized as a leader in the management consulting, marketing, and capacity building industries in Kosovo and the Western Balkans. MDA is committed to helping institutions in the private, public, and social sectors achieve lasting success.

Founded in 2001, with its 40 full-time associates and over 80 external experts, MDA has managed over 300 consulting and capacity building projects in the region. Committed to excellence and focused on client value, MDA designs and delivers innovative solutions to clients' most complex issues. Over the last 20 years, MDA has been the preferred partner of international and local organizations working in the region.



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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