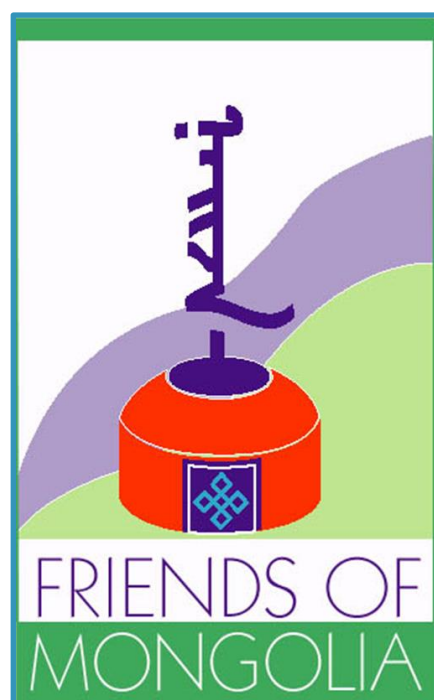


Friends of Mongolia

Newsletter

Oct-Dec 2022

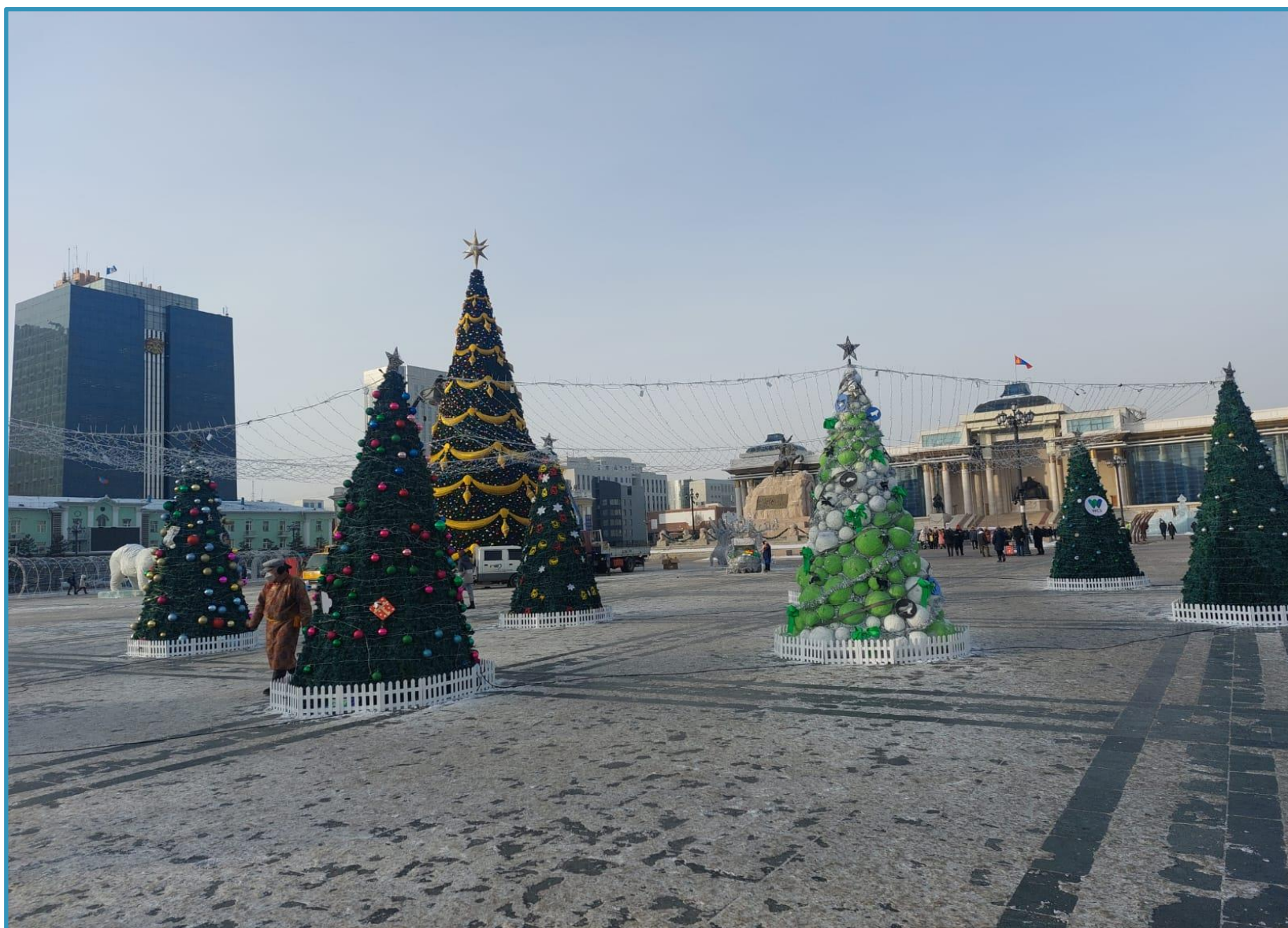


FRIENDS OF
MONGOLIA

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Introduction to the Team



From Left to Right: **Nicholas Millward** (US Co-Director), **Demchig Heruka** (MGL Membership Coordinator), **Christina Davakhu** (MGL Co-Director), **Jigselmaa Byambatogtoh** (MGL Treasurer), **Oyun Chimeg** (MGL Event Coordinator).



Undram Nyamaa (US Treasurer)



Stuart Summers (US Membership Coordinator)

FOM Mission

Friends of Mongolia (FOM) is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and developmental purposes. Our mission is to develop partnerships with the people of Mongolia in furtherance of cultural exchange and human development. In fulfillment of this mission, our membership and fundraising supports the core programs, listed below, that contribute to the future of Mongolia.

Oct-Dec 22 Update

The FOM Executive Committee (ExCom) is made up of a team of Americans and Mongolians spanning the globe. Virtual meetings aren't nearly as effective or enjoyable as in-person get-togethers, but we've been building upon the foundation laid by the previous FOM Officers and Board. We have been busy re-engaging partners and strengthening internal communication procedures in order to expand our three core programs, Education, Community Development, and Community Outreach. The Board and ExCom also recognized the potential for membership growth in Mongolia, leading to the onboarding of a larger Mongolian team.

In the Fall of 2022, FOM administered the Matthew Girvin Scholarship to eleven students, engaged with Sister-City representatives, re-connected with the Mongolian Embassy in Washington D.C, began the NGO registration process in Mongolia, consolidated membership records, onboarded four additional Mongolians (they will be introduced in the next newsletter), hosted two events in Ulaanbaatar, attended the Mongolian Studies conference at the Mongolian Embassy in Washington, as well as Lantuun Dohio's 5-k run and fundraising Gala, and supported the Mongolian School of the National Capital Area in Arlington for its 20-year anniversary fundraiser.

We still have a substantial way to go in maximizing our skills, connections, and energy. We are eager to garner your support in expanding our scholarship and grants programs (especially). This year alone, FOM received over 240 applications for our scholarship program. While this demonstrates that our reach is large, it is also a clear indicator that families need financial support for their children. We want to increase our support dramatically in the coming years. We need your continued support.



Peace Corps Returns

Daniel Lindbergh Lang



Two and a half years ago, I evacuated from Mongolia amid COVID-19 with little certainty as to when I may return. Nearly two months ago, I returned at last. Peace Corps staff here locally insisted upon reminding me how I'd told them I'd return—and here I was!



I trained in the countryside three years ago to serve in another city. Still, I feel touched by reminders of my former site in the most unexpected ways. Take the end of my second

week again in Mongolia, for example. I had just moved into my Ulaanbaatar apartment. I walked with my new counterpart, shopping to stock my place. Just as we rounded the corner, I heard my name. I turned around to see approaching me a beaming woman. Beside her stood a young man—her son—far taller than when I last saw him. They were parishioners from the church I attended in Erdenet three years ago. They were in town so the son could take his IELTS test. His English had markedly improved. I felt relieved to have seen their familiar faces.

In the capital, I encounter former students who've grown into young adults working and studying here. Some have participated in my new community projects, and at least one became a new community counterpart. As I navigate the city, I also find myself stumbling into buildings I recall having entered only once or twice as a Peace Corps Volunteer before. I find myself buying foods I remember my host family fed me from Darkhan during my first summer in this Land of the Eternal Blue Sky. I celebrate the simple reminders that I once lived in this country. I'm truly back. I hope the many who've come anew will experience the love and joy I have known so often, back now.



Reflections from a Fulbrighter

Audrey Kulberg

As 2022 comes to an end, I am wrapping up my first full year living in Mongolia as an English teacher. Although I originally came to Mongolia on a U.S. Fulbright grant, I have loved my time in Mongolia so much that I plan to stay for several more years as a teacher independent of the Fulbright program. Many friends and family at home don't understand why I would choose to continue to live in the coldest capital in the world, but for those like me who have given life in Mongolia a chance, the reasons to stay seem much more clear.

The truth is that, at least for Americans who have never been to Mongolia, it is nearly impossible to imagine what living in Mongolia in the year 2022 might actually be like. We have this ancient image of Mongolians as nomadic people who ride horses, live on the vast isolated steppe, and are tough enough to survive unimaginably cold winters. And yes, this is true of the countryside, which has its appeal in its own unique ways, promising adventure, natural beauty, and peaceful retreat from the modern tech-obsessed world. But that is very different than life in Ulaanbaatar, where half the country's population lives, and where I have spent 2022.

Before coming to Mongolia, I had four main fears: cold weather, air pollution, lack of vegetarian food (which is my diet), and loneliness. While certainly all these things have provided temporary challenges, the truth is that it has been so minor. The cold and air pollution are things that people can adjust to in surprisingly a short time, if you have the right mindset. Being a vegetarian in this country is certainly a major logistical challenge in the countryside, but really no problem at all in UB. The number of items labeled "vegan" in grocery stores, and the number of vegan restaurants in this city, seems to have increased significantly just in the one year I've lived here.

Most importantly, the highlight of Mongolia, at least for me, has been getting to know the wonderful people who live here. There is no shortage of opportunities for you to find warm-hearted people who will welcome you to join interesting activities and social networks. I frequently volunteer at the American Corner, where I run a weekly English debate club and assist with other public educational programs. I also became a member of a Toastmasters club that meets there weekly, through which I have made good friends. When I reached out to a bunch of random ultimate frisbee Facebook pages in early 2022, I was pleasantly surprised when a group messaged me back and welcomed me onto their team, which is now an active community that I am deeply involved in. And this does not even include all the opportunities and people I've met through language exchange groups, public events, and even encountering friendly strangers on the street. People in Mongolia are genuinely welcoming in a way that just doesn't exist in the U.S... It is common for people you've just met to treat you like an old friend, so I did not have trouble developing some sense of belonging early on in my time in UB.

Many people think I am overcoming some challenge or hardship by continuing to live here, but it simply doesn't feel that way to me. Yes, it is cold. There is air pollution. The language is hard. There are cultural differences. I miss my friends, my family, and a good slice of pizza. But there is so much more keeping me here, that I often don't notice the things that make it difficult. I am always being invited to go hiking, attend trivia and comedy nights hosted at trendy restaurants, and take part in the surprisingly vibrant latin dance scene. And I haven't even mentioned karaoke yet... (my friends and I have a running joke that you can't walk 50 feet in any direction without passing at least two karaoke joints). My point is – I couldn't imagine any of the activities or connections I now have before I arrived in Mongolia, because it simply didn't fit with the image I have in my head. But the truth is, Mongolia is a wonderful and exciting place to live, and I think many Americans would love it as much as I do if they gave it a chance.



Audrey and her Community

Audrey Kulberg



Escaping the City

Tom Offer-Westort (Fulbright)

Dog Sledding in Terelj

I arrived in Mongolia two months ago to conduct conservation psychology research. My research explores public attitudes related to the environment, but I've barely been outside the city myself. When a new friend invited me to Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, I jumped at the opportunity. I only found out after accepting that it was for a weekend of dog sledding.

We left early on Saturday to fit in a full day of mushing. The tourist zone of Terelj is only an hour away from the capital and still within the municipality of Ulaanbaatar, but it's a dramatic shift from the city I'm getting to know. There were a few other gers near our camp, but it was mostly undeveloped wilderness. I'd imagined that we would be sitting in the sleds or possibly steering with considerable assistance, but we were each given our own sled and team of six dogs.

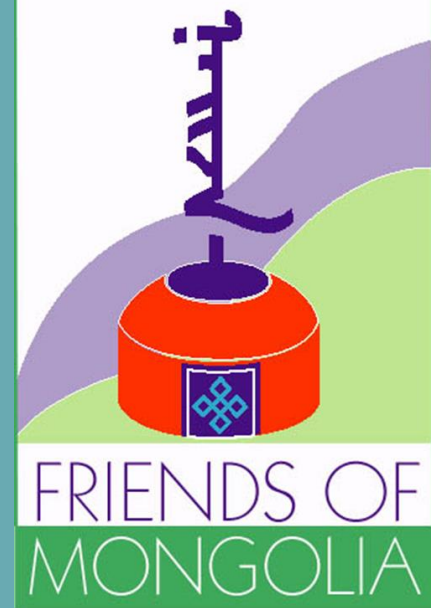
Our guide warned us that the first leg of the trip would be the most difficult. The route followed a frozen river, and wind had cleared away most of the snow cover, leaving long stretches of bare ice. Water levels were low this year, so more rock was exposed than usual. In a few places mountain runoff created a couple inches of water that hadn't frozen yet.

Amazingly, the dogs seemed largely unphased by this. They took off at full tilt. At the first big turn, my sled took the curve so quickly that one runner rose six inches off the ground. I experimented with using the brake more liberally, but the lead dogs kept looking back disapprovingly. It was more than half an hour before I could pry my eyes away from what was directly in front of me to appreciate how picturesque the surroundings were. One highlight was crossing a set of wolf tracks and comparing them directly to our dogs' much smaller tracks.

The experience was far more challenging than I'd anticipated, but I'm already planning my next trip outside the city.



October



October was an administratively-heavy month. We restarted our monthly emails sharing upcoming opportunities. We are happy to receive feedback or input regarding these emails, as we want to ensure our information is relevant to you, your families, and your friends.



On October 7th/8th the new Executive Committee held their first meeting with the current Board members. Leading up to this meeting, inactive or disinterested Board members were removed from the current board, resulting in a smaller board of individuals who have expressed an interest and commitment to expanding FOM's impact. Additionally, Ariel Wyckoff was elected as the Board Chair for the rest of 2022, and throughout 2023.

Topics of discussion included, amendments to officer terms (removing the 2-year limitation), expansion of the education program to include sharing knowledge on opportunities for fellowship, scholarship, and conferences, as well as expectations for Board and ExCom members.

Since we focused on planning and internal procedures in October; we do not have many photos featuring our efforts. However, the FOM Mongolia team held a small award ceremony for this year's scholarship recipients at the end of September. Below are some photos of our team and recipients.



November



In November, a long-time partner of FOM, Lantuun Dohio, held a virtual 5k fundraiser and an in-person race in the DC area. Members of FOM contributed and ran both in the DC race and from Brisbane, Australia. Check out Lantuun Dohio's mission here: <https://lantuundohio.org/>



In Mongolia, the FOM Mongolia team was busy disbursing funds for our student's scholarships and verifying students received the funds in their accounts. Meetings were held between FOM officers and Rotary Clubs in the US, in hopes of partnering to establish long-term scholarship programs in Mongolia.

FOM made a small donation to the Mongolian School of the National Capital Area during their 20 year anniversary and fundraising event.

FOM officers continued to engage with representatives from sister-cities across the US in an effort to establish an informal and collaborative network that can better serve interested communities. We are eager to expand our partnerships beyond traditional frameworks and are looking for willing/interested partners across the US and Mongolia.

December



The FOM Mongolia team and US Co-Director participated in a leadership retreat to Terelj National Park in early December on December 10th.

They discussed each program (Education, Community Development, Community Outreach). The team agreed upon a theme for the Spring 2023 grants, decided to “hire” new members for the FOM Mongolia team, and revised the scholarship program’s schedule of events.

FOM members were invited by the Mongolian Embassy to attend the Mongolian Studies Conference "First Mongols in the US" on December 10th.



FOM hosted a holiday party on December 17th. We had friends from Peace Corps, Fulbright, YouthINC, ACMS, and our scholarship recipients in attendance. It was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to connect and network in hopes of future collaboration.

Matthew Girvin Scholarship 2022-2023



Friends of Mongolia, in partnership with YouthINC and the Innovia Foundation, administered the Matthew Girvin Scholarship for 11 students in the Fall of 2022.

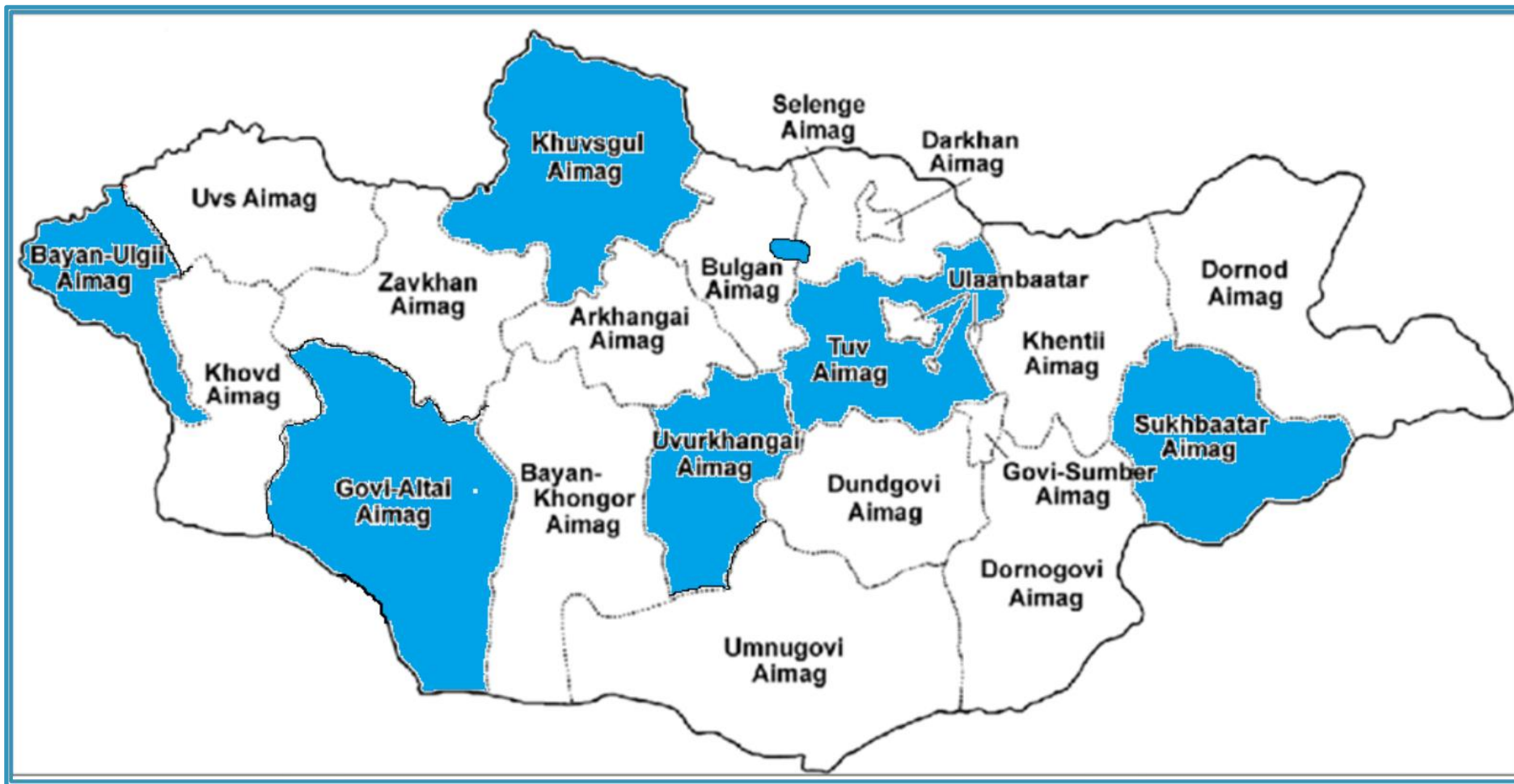
It is the Girvins' desire to annually fund full-tuition scholarships for highly qualified secondary school graduates from low-income families in the rural areas of Mongolia wishing to study at some of the best state institutions of higher learning within the country. Once selected, scholarship recipients are given preference for future awards as long as they are in good standing with the university during their term of study.



If you want to learn more about Matthew Girvin's dedication, spirit, and life of service, feel free to visit his website.

<https://www.matthewgirvin.org/scholarships>

2022-2023 Scholarship Recipients



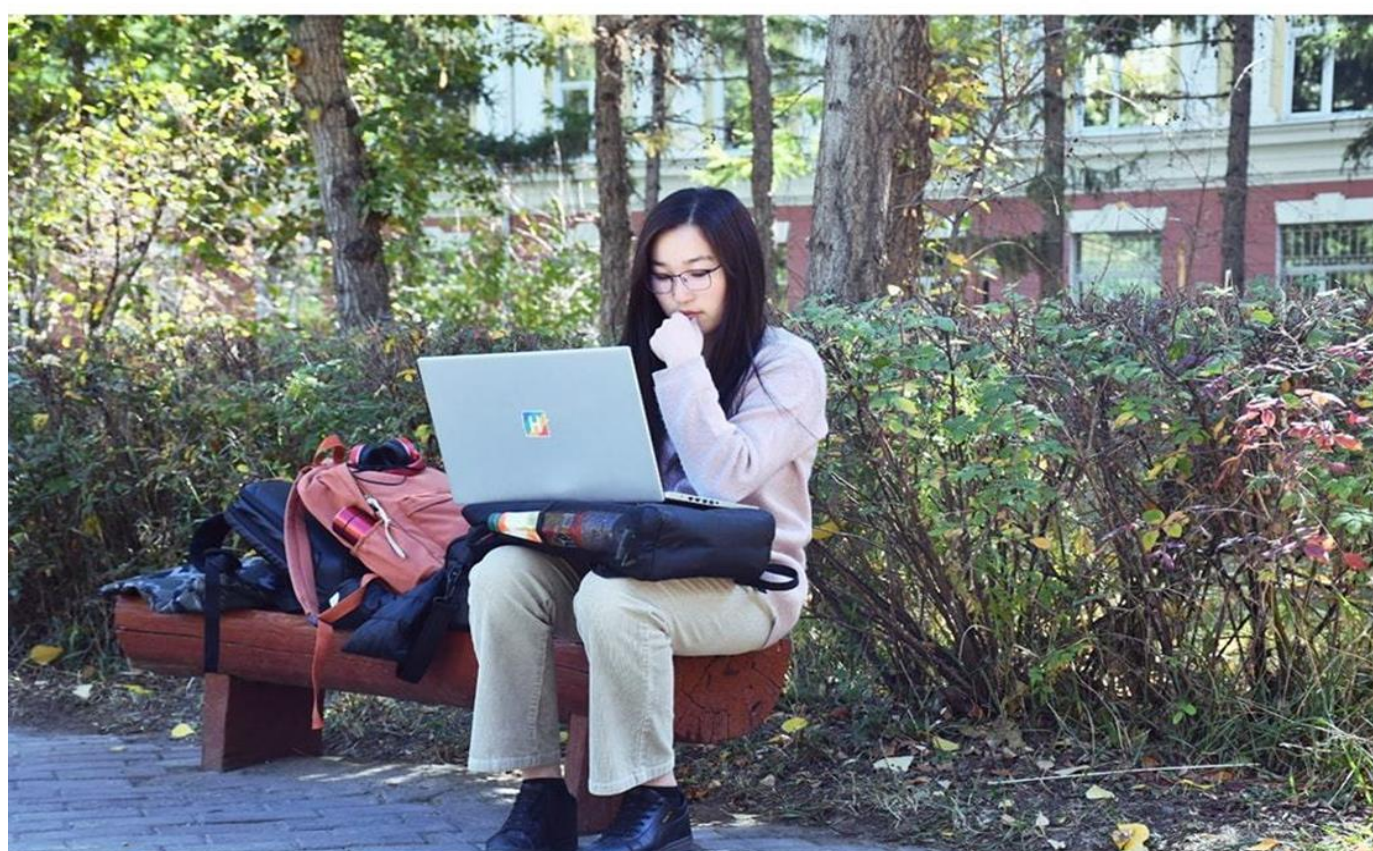
Name	Province	University	Major	University level
Munkhtsatsral Ganbat	Gobi-Altai	NUM	Finance	Sophomore
Orgilmandakh Batdorj	Huvsgul	MUST	Pilot engineer	Sophomore
Lkhagvasuren Ganbold	Govi Altai	NUM	Financial Management	Senior
Mungunchimeg Munguntsetseg	Sukhbaatar	MNUMS	Pharmacist	Senior
Yerketai Akhiibek	Bayan-Ulgii	MNUMS	Surgery and MD	Senior
Sumiyabazar Bazarragchaa	Ovorkhangai	Ach Medical School	Medical Doctor	Junior
Gandi Tegshee	Govi-Altai	MNU Arts and Culture	Classic music, Piano	Freshmen
Bodisanchir Batbold	Tov	NUM	Biotechnology	Freshmen
Davaadulam Oyunbaatar	Ovorkhangai	NUM	Programmist IT	Senior
Enhjin Batbaysgalan	Govi-Altai	NUM	Lawyer	Sophomore
Jamiyansuren Altanhuyag	Orkhon	MNUMS	Medical Doctor	Senior





Bodisanchir Batbold

When I first applied for a scholarship to Friends of Mongolia, I passed the desired school with high marks. However, due to the lack of tuition fees, I even considered taking a gap year from the university and to get a job to pay the tuition. However, Friends of Mongolia gave me the opportunity to qualify for this scholarship and not give up on my dreams because of money. I am sure that by receiving this scholarship, studying without any financial burden will have an amazing effect on my studies and become the basis for many future successes.



Davaadulam Oyunbaatar

I am still very grateful for receiving the scholarship. The scholarship has helped me a lot in my studies and development, and I am very happy that I have a good team and people who will support me even after the scholarship. Thank you to everyone who supported my desire to grow and develop.



Enkhjin Batbayasgalan



The scholarship provided to me by FOM has served as an affirmation, not only to perform well in my studies but also to help others and give back to the community. With the received award, I feel much closer to fulfilling my dream of becoming a lawyer. It also helps me tremendously to concentrate more of my time on studying and challenge myself in extracurricular activities without as much worry about finances. I am deeply appreciative of it.

Ghandi Tegshee



From the day I heard that I was qualified for the Friends of Mongolia scholarship, the most beautiful light came on in my life and there were no obstacles in my professional studies. Being the winner of this scholarship opened the doors to my dreams and made me realize my goals even more. In order not to lose the trust of our donors, we have to study and work harder in the future.



Lkhagvasuren Ganbold

By participating in the scholarship program of Friends of Mongolia, I was able to fully concentrate on my studies. It became the basis for conducting research and improving professional and other skills. It also gave me a lot of positive things, such as practicing, expanding my circle of friends, improving my communication skills, and becoming more motivated to help others. I would like to thank FOM staff, and donors for always being with me and creating proud memories of my student life.



Jamiyansuren Altankhuyag

The Friends of Mongolia scholarship program gave me not only financial support, but also self-confidence, motivation, friends and colleagues. I am confident that the benefits of this scholarship will lead to the creation of the best leading experts who will represent every field in the future of Mongolia.



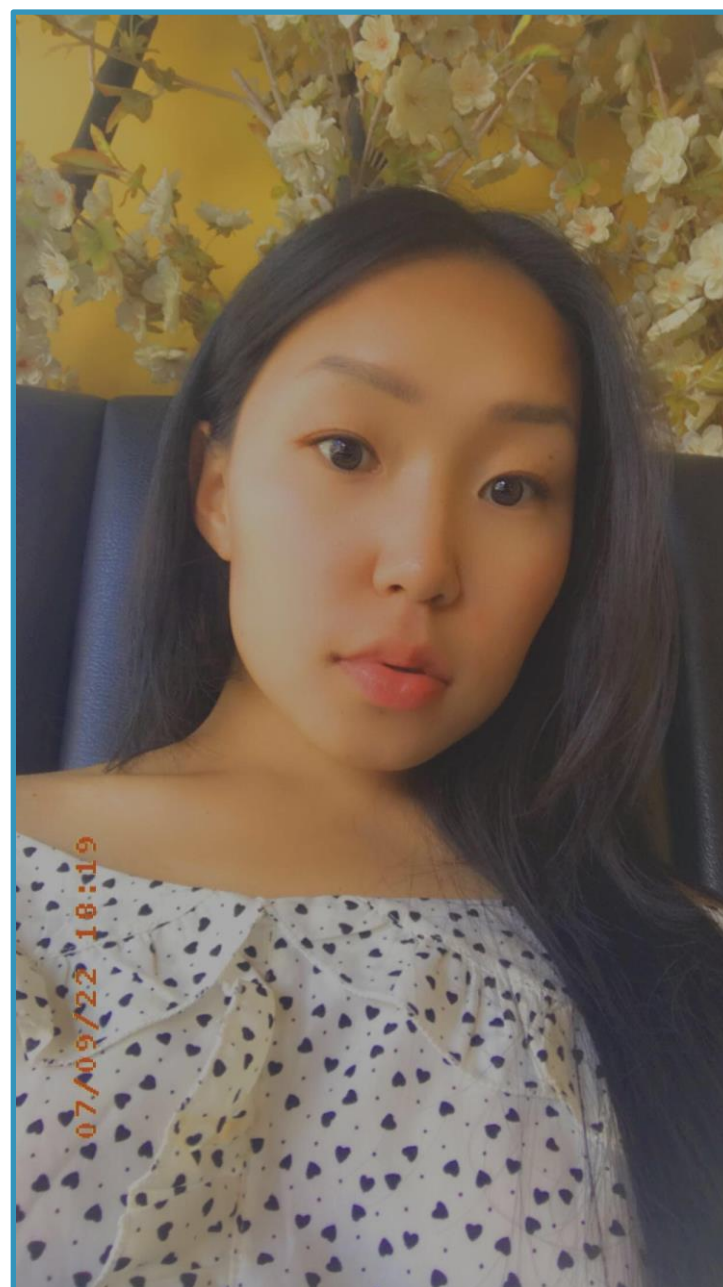
Mungunchimeg Munguntsetseg



First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for providing this scholarship. Being a scholarship student not only helps me and my family a lot, but also gives me more self-confidence and motivation to continue studying. Scholarships not only solve financial problems for students, but also provide an incentive for further study and self-development.

Munkhtsatsral Ganbat

This is the second year that I have received a scholarship from the Friends of Mongolia. The staff of the organization have given me the opportunity to study the profession I was interested in. Also, by receiving the scholarship, I have more time and money for personal development. It is becoming possible to learn in courses based on your own interests, so I am very grateful to the FOM team.





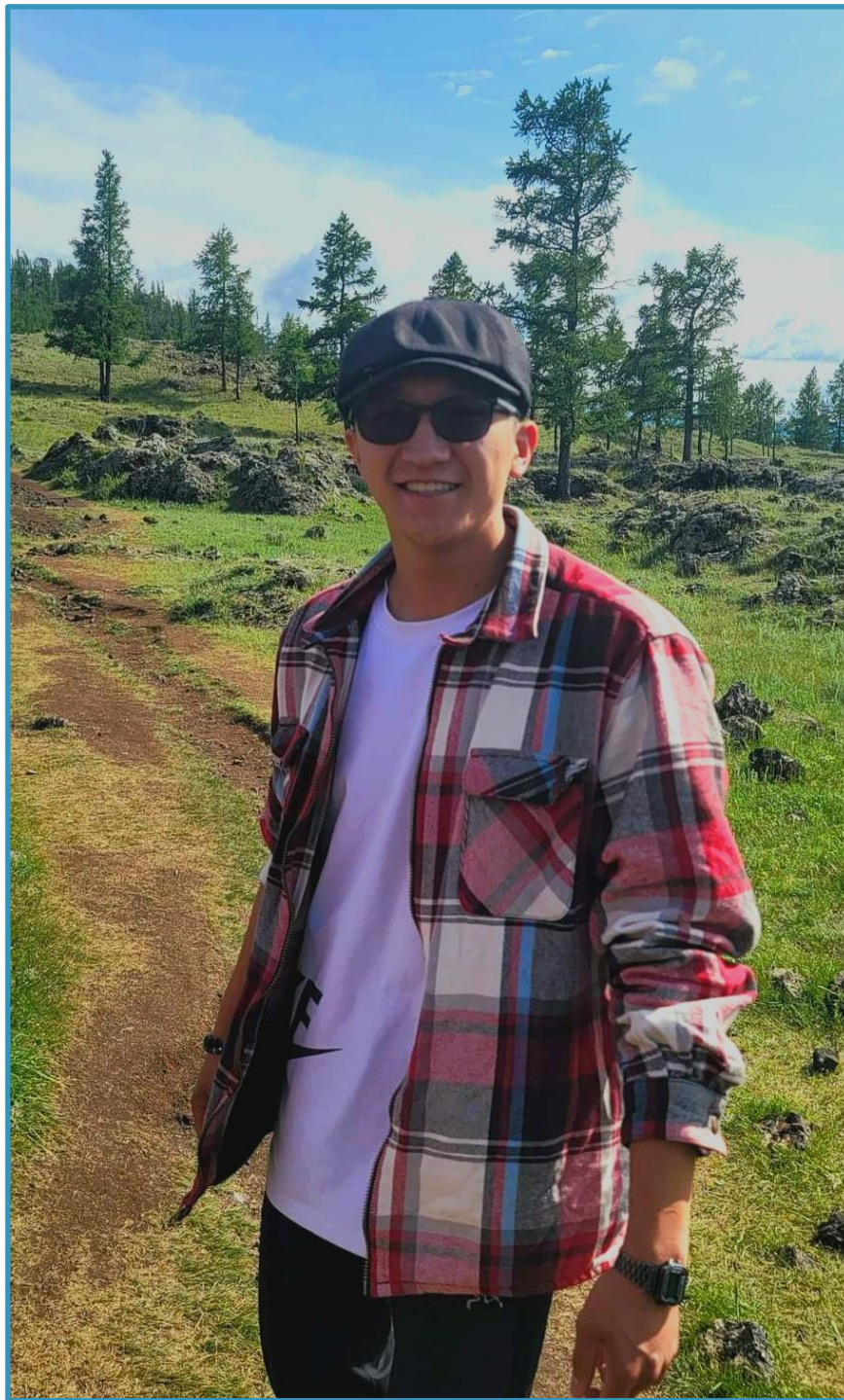
Orgilmandakh Batdorj

In 2021-2022, I received a scholarship from the non-governmental organization Friends of Mongolia. Since I was a child, I was very interested in airplanes, so now I am very grateful that Friends of Mongolia gave me the opportunity to study as an aeronautical engineer. I imagine myself as a passenger traveling to a distant destination. Even when I am tired and exhausted from the long journey, I travel on that road without giving up. This scholarship program is a part of the journey and a lifeline that will give me energy and support for the long journey.



I am happy to receive this scholarship for the 4th year. This scholarship is the main influence of my proud achievements. We would like to express our gratitude to Friends of Mongolia, all the employees, donors and volunteers in America and Mongolia, who have successfully organized the scholarship every year despite the difficult times and the pandemic! Thank you all very much!

Yerketai Akhiibek



Sumiyabazar Bazarragchaa

5 years ago, I started my career as a doctor by participating in the scholarship program and entering medical school. Now I am very close to my dream and I am very grateful to Friends of Mongolia for giving me this opportunity. I am very grateful not only for the scholarship program, but also for improving our communication skills, teamwork and personal skills that we will need in the future. All these are the starting point for me and others to become capable personnel and create a lot for our country. I learned a lot, including how important it is to have colleagues and friends, to fight for your dreams, and how much you can help others through your profession. I am sure that in the future, I will continue to be learning various knowledge and live in search of the right.

Upcoming Opportunities and Useful Resources

Friends of Mongolia was designed to only be limited by the capacity and resources of its members. We are eager to collaborate with individuals, organizations, and businesses to expand our impact, both in depth and breadth. Feel free to contact us with ideas!



Opportunities to Serve or Connect

-FOM operates solely on donations. We appreciate any amount you can spare. This money goes to our three core programs (nothing to the volunteers). Please share our organization with friends and family, or anyone who has an interest in Mongolia. We want to serve as a centralizing hub for community relations.

-We are looking for potential partners (individuals, cohorts, Rotary Clubs, etc) to help us with a 21 Province/21 Student Scholarship Program. In the coming years we are hoping to provide full tuition scholarships for a student from each province. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Nick at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org

-We are interested in supporting formalized and informal/nascent Sister-City relationships, especially in Denver, Fairbanks, Bellingham (Washington), Irving (Texas), and St. Louis. If you are in or around these cities and interested in learning more, please contact Nick at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org. If you aren't in these cities but still want to participate in events, let us know and we could potentially help you arrange something local.

-We will be announcing our grant program shortly. At our leadership retreat, we determined that the theme for this first round of grant making for 2023 should be youth focused/youth led and in the countryside. We recognize the spirit and energy the Mongolian youth possess, the innovative and fresh perspectives that they bring to bear on the 21st Century society of Mongolia, and we want to enable and empower them as much as possible.

-We are exploring the options for holding a Tsagaan Sar Celebration near the D.C. area. Stay tuned for further details. If you are in the area and are interested in helping facilitate an event, please let us know at codirector.usa@friendsofmongolia.org.

-In our next newsletter, we will feature our new/recently selected Mongolian team members. They will be assisting with our scholarship and grant programs.

Useful Resources

Great Links or sources to keep you up to date with Mongolia:

- American Center for Mongolian Studies- <https://www.mongoliacenter.org/>
- Mongolia Institute (ANU)- <https://mongoliainstitute.anu.edu.au/>
- LemonPress- <https://lemonpress.mn/team/>
- Inside Mongolia- <https://insidemongolia.lemonpress.mn/>
- American Chamber of Commerce- <https://amcham.mn/>