

# KOSOVO AMERICAN EDUCATION FUND

*Quarterly Newsletter, September 2023*



Hana Bektashi (George Washington University '24)

# PROGRAM RECRUITMENT CYCLE 2024

The application for the 2024 KAEF Graduate Fellowship Program closed on September 25th, 2023. This year, KAEF received numerous applications, which are now undergoing a thorough review by the U.S. Selection Committee. The top-tier candidates will be moving forward to the next stages of the recruitment process soon.

An encouraging highlight was the active participation of KAEF alumni, who generously shared invaluable advice for new applicants through these channels. Their insights underscored the strong KAEF community spirit.

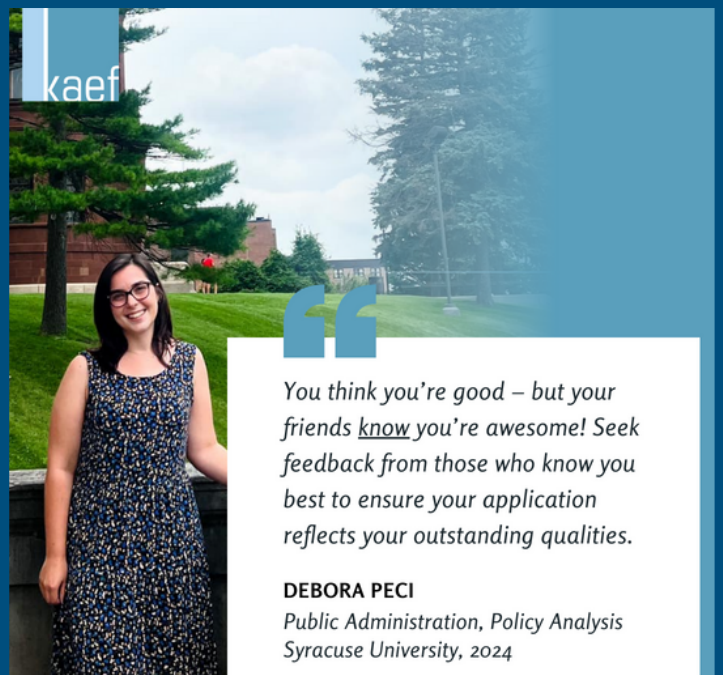


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*KAEF is more than a scholarship. It's a friendly network of professionals ready to help you. Don't be shy to ask others for advice.*

**BARDH RUSHITI**  
Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence  
Rochester Institute of Technology, 2023



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*You think you're good – but your friends know you're awesome! Seek feedback from those who know you best to ensure your application reflects your outstanding qualities.*

**DEBORA PECI**  
Public Administration, Policy Analysis  
Syracuse University, 2024



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*Make your personal statement a story of what you expect to gain from the Fellowship and how you will use that experience to make a difference upon your return to Kosovo. Be visionary, but realistic.*

**FESTA STAVILECI**  
Law, Corporate Law  
Duke University, 2023



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*Start working on your personal statement early. The more time you invest in it, the less it sounds like a written resume and the more of a storyteller you become in your interview.*

**RINA BULLIQI**  
Business Administration, Entrepreneurship  
University of North Carolina, 2024

# UPDATE FROM KAEF FELLOW



**Hana Bekteshi (George Washington University '24)**

“Witnessing these past two months pass by so quickly, I can definitely say I feel some pressure in trying my best to make the most out of this experience. Simply put, there is no time to get bored!

Initially the main challenge was to adapt with the U.S. teaching system, however the countless sources and support of the professors certainly helped set a productive and highly efficient routine. I am overwhelmed with the care and support system George Washington University offers to their students through the professors, the staff, as well as the other cohorts, whether it is by providing assistance with class materials, mental health care, sports, entertainment activities etc.

In addition to academics and student associations, there are great opportunities to expand your network and meet some of the most influential people in the U.S. Thanks to the advantage of living in the capital and the most politically influential city in the U.S, I have been lucky enough to meet with U.S. Supreme Court judges, senators, and other legal experts in the field, all of which have humbly shared invaluable advice and experiences.

Nonetheless, sharing cultural differences with other peers has to be one of my favorite parts of this journey. While there's amusement in learning more about different cultures and traditions, sharing recipes from different cuisines, as well as trying to teach and learn each other's languages, there's most definitely some pride in seeing how we each turn into "ambassadors" of our countries.

Needless to say, so far these past months have offered me the most extraordinary experiences and I cannot emphasize enough how lucky we are for having a program like KAEF.”

# ALUMNI GIVING BACK WEEK CAMPAIGN



Alumni Giving Back Week Campaign

**Bridging Generations,  
Empowering the Future**



July 3rd, 2023 - KAEF launched its first-ever Alumni Giving Back Week Campaign, aiming to rally the community for a collective cause of raising \$10,000.

The goal was for half of this amount to come from KAEF alumni and supporters, and the rest being matched by FINCA Kosova, the generous matching donor of the campaign. The funds raised through this campaign were directly channeled towards scholarships and other essential educational initiatives at KAEF.

Erëza Gjikolli (Bentley University '21), the President of the KAEF Alumni Association, voiced her encouragement during the campaign saying, "...[T]he inception of the Alumni Giving Back Week Campaign beckons our unity. The culmination of our collective endeavors will undeniably chart the course for upcoming KAEF fellows. When you engage, it transcends mere support. It's an emblem of the unity, resilience, and dedication intrinsic to the KAEF family. I urge every member to participate, ensuring we not only meet our objectives but also instill a robust tradition of giving back."

Five days later, thanks to the overwhelming support, the Alumni Giving Back Week Campaign met its target. Together with the contributions of KAEF alumni, supporters, and the matching gift from FINCA Kosova, KAEF achieved its goal of \$10,000.

KAEF expresses profound gratitude to all participants. Such contributions reinforce KAEF's mission and amplify the positive change possible for its fellows. A heartfelt thanks for the unwavering backing and generosity!

# KAEF BUSINESS BREAKFAST SERIES

September 28th, 2023 - The KAEF Business Breakfast series was honored to have Mr. Elvin Guri, a distinguished entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist, as our guest of honor. Engaging with our program alumni and attendees, Mr. Guri delved deep into his experiences as an investor in the region. He talked about the challenges and obstacles that he has faced and explained the strategies employed to overcome them. Drawing from his vast experience, Mr. Guri inspired a spirited conversation about the resilience, adaptability, and innovation required in today's investment landscape.

The KAEF Business Breakfast is a regular meeting, fostering a space for the business community and KAEF alumni to discuss pivotal issues that shape Kosovo's present and future.



# KAEF ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

Hana Bacaj (Vanderbilt University '20), the Director of Research at UBO Consulting, has embarked on a collaborative role as a researcher at UN Women Albania. She recently contributed to the "Voices of Youth: Gender Equality and Social Cohesion in the Western Balkans" discussion held in Tirana. Joined by fellow UBO members, the discussion delved into various inter-regional collaborations.

A study endorsed by UN Women underscores that toxic expressions of masculinity, entrenched gender stereotypes, hate speech, and the portrayal of traditional gender roles in the media elevate the risk of violence, particularly directed toward women. This form of violence is recognized as the most prevalent across the region.

The outcomes of this research, along with its recommendations, were presented during this event in Tirana. The audience comprised young researchers, youth networks, and institutions from various parts of the Western Balkans.





Learn more: [kaef-online.org](https://kaef-online.org)

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**CONTACT:**

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

