



THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SOFIA ANNUAL GIVING REPORT 2021-2022




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The American College of Sofia integrates the values and best practices of American pedagogy with the rich educational traditions of Bulgaria and Europe. We seek to develop critical thinking, lifelong intellectual curiosity, leadership, and collaboration among multi-talented students of various social, cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds.

The American College of Sofia provides an outstanding private education to 954 Bulgarian and international students. Accredited by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and IBO, ACS offers a rigorous academic program and an impressive variety of extra-curricular activities.

The American College of Sofia (ACS) is operated and funded by Sofia American Schools, Inc. (SAS), a non-profit, educational corporation chartered in 1926 in the United States by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



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Greetings, friends!

On my first day at ACS in September 1992, our English teacher taught us the word “commencement”. He was, of course, thinking of the new school year. But as one of the ten young idealists who painted walls, scrubbed floors and moved furniture to prepare our only (at the time) building for first bells, our teacher was also celebrating the beginning – or new beginning – of ACS. And unwittingly, that teacher was also forging a symbol for ACS itself – the excitement and promise of possibility woven into the word “commencement” truly represent the sentiments felt when joining the ACS community. So it is only natural that this word emerges as I reflect on the concluding year at ACS – this past school year was a year of *Commencements*.

The 2021-2022 school year gave us opportunities to celebrate a number of great new beginnings; I will highlight three. After an intense search process and a year of much anticipation, we were beyond thrilled to welcome to campus our new President,

Emily Sargent Beasley! In only 100 days on the job, Emily has connected, learned, traveled, queried, listened, hosted, and built – and this is just the beginning! The College and the Board commenced **implementation of the College’s new Strategic Plan** as we focus on the institution’s forward trajectory and continued successes. We are excited to share our progress as we innovate our student experience into the future, and to learn from your continued valuable feedback. And in a year when life has gradually returned to normalcy, we began to **engage in person** as a community through on-campus reunions, alumni get-togethers around the world, campus family events, Arts Fest, the Board’s in-person meeting and graduation participation, and more. We are so grateful!

2022 has also marked a 30-year milestone of another crucial commencement. As we prepare to celebrate **three decades of ACS** growth and flourishing, we will of course reminisce about the heady beginning with only one building, one class, one hundred students. We will also, and as importantly, reflect on what ACS’s next 30 years could – or must – look like through work on the Strategic Plan. I hope that you will join us in both: a look back as we look forward, together as a community.

Ultimately, whether in 2022, 1992 or 2052, we commit to remain in direct service of ACS’s mission – teaching bright young people the meaning and inspiration contained in the word “commencement”, day after day, and decade after decade.

We thank you, the members of our ACS family, for everything you do to help us fulfill our mission!

Theodora Konetsovska '97

Chair of the Board of Trustees



Dear Friends of ACS,

It is with pleasure that I open this reflection of the year past in the present with attention to our Mission.

The American College of Sofia integrates the values and best practices of American pedagogy with the rich educational traditions of Bulgaria and Europe. We seek to develop critical thinking, lifelong intellectual curiosity, leadership, and collaboration among multi-talented students of various social, cultural, economic, and geographic backgrounds.

While it is true that it is not unusual for mission statements to celebrate diversity and excellence, the effort that is extended to insist that this is so is remarkable and is a hallmark of the College. This insistence requires the removal of barriers to leverage resources so that any student who aspires to embody our mission and demonstrates the capacity to academically thrive receives an invitation to attend. This unique feature would not be possible without a community; in the spirit, I call attention to its impact.

The Class of '22 join a group of more than 3,000 alumni who have made all parts of the world home. They are ready for whatever challenges await them. The Class of '27 now embarks on what will be their unique ACS experience, an experience that will benefit from the talents and curiosities of the twenty-six preceding classes, the number of classes that have received the accolade of an ACS diploma since reopening our doors thirty years ago.

As we celebrate our students, past and present, we celebrate our faculty and staff. Our mission is enlivened through the efforts of talented professionals and practitioners who collectively weave the traditions of Bulgarian and American education into what is the ACS experience. They do so with the indefatigable support of our ACS friends, parents, and Trustees who are also inspired to contribute in ways that make a meaningful impact.

This year, we serve our largest student body of 954 students. Our attrition remains at a historic low. We provide more than 1.8 million leva annually in financial assistance. Twenty-two students at ACS are active recipients of full scholarships. I share the history of giving and the history of these scholarships to celebrate the living legacy of this long standing tradition, expressed through scholarship, dedicated funds, and campus enhancements.

As we move into the next thirty years, our Mission will continue to influence a Culture of Giving. This culture is supported by service, generous donations, grants, and recurring gifts in support of teaching and learning, special projects, and financial assistance. Each and every contribution makes a difference in the life of an ACS student.

In closing, I thank each of you for your continued pride in this special school and hope you are inspired by this year's Annual Report. It is a read that celebrates the achievements in the year just past, all the while looking forward to the future.

With kind regards,

Emily Sargent Beasley

President

A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS, A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Dear reader,

Philanthropic giving is, and has been since day one, an essential part of ACS's finances. It makes what we strive for – providing an outstanding education to every deserving student regardless of their family's ability to pay tuition – and everything we achieve at the College possible.



In 2021-2022, we were fortunate and humbled to be able to count on the continued support of many friends of ACS near and far. Never before had we been able to offer more scholarships – full as well as partial – to deserving students. Our longest serving scholarships, **The Polansky Scholarship**, named for the Hon. Sol Polansky, former U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria whose role was instrumental in helping the College reopen in 1992 and who served as an ACS Trustee and **The Oberbauer Scholarship**, named for Joseph Oberbauer, one of the principal architects of the city plan of modern Sofia, were established in 2008. The Polansky and Oberbauer Scholarships cover all tuition fees for the entire period of enrollment at the College and so does **The Gipson Scholarship**, established in 2018, named for extraordinary ACS friends and supporters Nellie and Robert Gipson. The five full Polansky, Oberbauer, and Gipson Scholarships are funded by the Tianaderrah Foundation of New York. Established in 2021, each year, the alum-founded **Sunrise Scholarship** covers the full tuition and dormitory fee for one out-of-Sofia Bulgarian over their five year term. Every year, **The Frank Bauer Fund for Financial Aid** for out-of-Sofia students enables us to offer sufficient tuition reduction to the families of deserving students. This year, this spirit of scholarships now includes the board-initiated **Inez Abbott Giving Circle** that supports out-of-Sofia female students with leadership potential. In addition to **The Theodora and Darina Spasov Scholarship**, providing tuition reduction to the girl in every class who has the keenest financial need, we now have **The Boris Lozanov Scholarship**, as well as an alumnus-initiated support for tuition reduction for three students from a single-parent household.

Inspired by the pivotal support of our leading benefactors, everyone within the community rolled up their sleeves and did their best. Students took part in diverse academic and extracurricular exchanges and engaged in many community service projects. (p.18)



As war broke out in Ukraine in the spring of 2022 and many citizens were fleeing, The American College of Sofia quickly acted to help displaced students. Together with the support of several partner organizations, as an act of solidarity, the cost of tuition for the 2021-2022 school year was waived for ten new Ukrainian high school students. We were delighted to welcome the majority of these students back for the 2022-2023 school year, again with substantial financial aid. The American College of Sofia stands united with Ukraine and its students.

In May we sent off the Class of 2022, the 26th class to graduate ACS and join the now more than 3,000 American College alumni. (p.25)

There was a tangible feeling of elation as events that we had had to miss due to Covid and the related restrictions in the previous couple of years made their way back to campus in late spring. In June, we held our single largest fundraising and community-outreach event, Arts Fest. In July, we not only held the traditional summer alumni reunion – for the first time since the summer of 2019 – but we invited classes that missed theirs due to the pandemic in 2020 and in 2021 to attend special make-up reunions. And so, we had a series of summer Friday alum get-togethers, spanning half the ACS classes that graduated starting with and including the Class of 1997. (p.15)

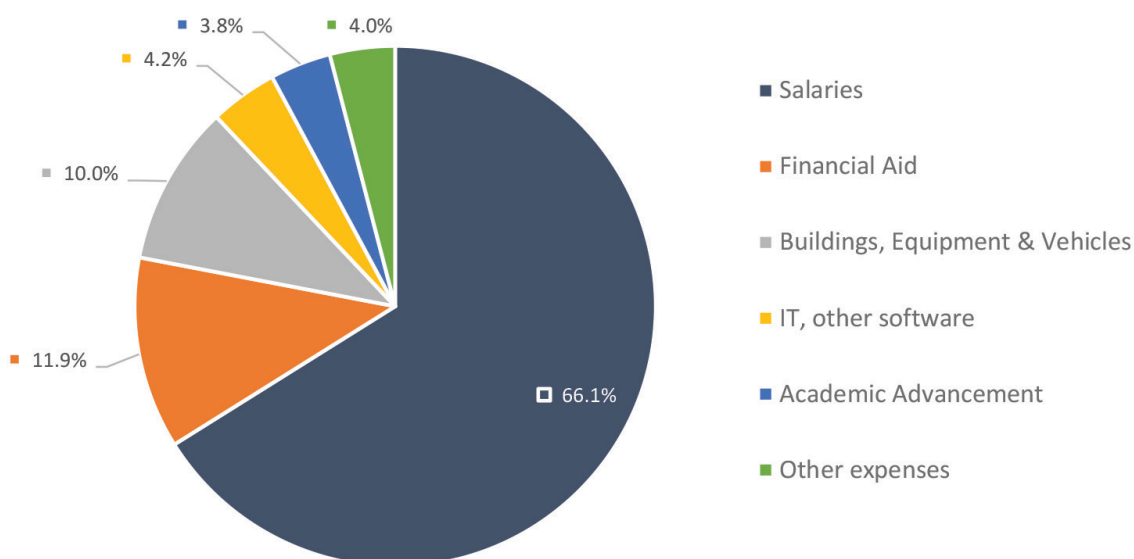
For the third year in a row, we held our Gift of Security summer fundraising campaign over July and August, and the third time's the charm: we broke records for this campaign in support of the financial aid program of ACS – number of donors, amounts donated, you name it. (p.14)

Thank you to all who contributed to 2021-2022 becoming another year of achievements, another year to remember!

The ACS Advancement Team

Operational Budget for the 2021-2022 School Year

Total Expenses: **14,206,11 leva**



SPECIAL GIFTS

Gifts over 10,000 leva

Anonymous Donor (Sunrise Scholarship)

Ann Ferren

Frank Bauer

Karen Collias & Geoffrey Levitt

Gipson Family Foundation

Rachel Gray

Theodora Konetsovska '97

Samuel Seymour

The Tianaderrah Foundation

Roger and Susan Whitaker

William J. Williams



Ferren Meeting Room

Ann S. Ferren provided support for this room to recognize its use for events and activities that reflect her commitment to faculty collaboration, inclusive curricula, and educational innovation. Ms. Ferren served on the ACS Board of Trustees from 2010 to 2022 and was Provost at the American University in Bulgaria from 2005 to 2010 following a distinguished career as a university administrator and faculty member in the United States.

For more information about ACS naming opportunities, please contact Georgi Metodiev in the Advancement Office at g.metodiev@acsbg.org.

The Inez Abbott Women's Giving Circle at ACS

The Inez Abbott Women's Giving Circle is proud to announce our first two scholarship recipients: Monika Arnaudova and Yoana Valentinova, both from the Class of 2023.

Monika, originally from Burgas, is passionate about making a mark on the world. She is interested in international relations and law and wants to have a diplomatic or professional role in the European Union. In 2022, she visited Vienna and Turkey on a student study program made possible by ACS and sponsored by Erasmus+ (the EU's program supporting education, training, youth and sport), which solidified her interests and motivated her continued study of German as a complement to her masterful English. Monika is considering universities in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. At ACS, Monika has elected Foreign Languages with German as her Profile and enjoys dancing and creative writing. In 2022, she was the President of *The Fountain Magazine Club*.

Yoana is a student from Botevgrad who plans to pursue a career in medicine. She has wanted to become a doctor since very young because she feels that profession would allow her to combine her knowledge of science with her empathy for humanity. Yoana plans to practice medicine in Bulgaria to serve its citizens. She is therefore considering universities exclusively in Bulgaria. At ACS, Yoana has elected Natural Sciences as her Profile and enjoys reading books and hiking.

We congratulate Monika and Yoana, and we look forward to witnessing their future successes as they pursue their professional and personal goals.





The Inez Abbott Women's Giving Circle was founded in 2021 by female Trustees of the Board of the American College of Sofia. Our mission is to support young women coming to ACS from outside of Sofia through scholarships and initiatives emphasizing leadership, social justice, and public service.

Please join us in support of young women who will be future leaders in Bulgaria by becoming members of the Inez Abbott Women's Giving Circle and contributing to our scholarship fund.



For additional information on how to join us, please contact Georgi Metodiev at g.metodiev@acsbg.org.

Who Was Inez L. Abbott?

Inez Louise Abbott, namesake of both the Women's Giving Circle and the newly renovated Abbott Hall, was a remarkable leader who devoted nearly two decades of her life in service to educating Bulgarian girls.



Born in Lansing, Michigan in 1869 and a Bachelor's and Master's degree recipient from the University of Michigan, Ms. Abbott traveled to Bulgaria in 1907 to become principal of The Girls School of Samokov on appointment from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In addition to her impressive academic and fundraising work for the school in Samokov, Ms. Abbott was instrumental in the consolidation of the Boys and Girls schools into the American College of Sofia in 1926-27. Ms. Abbott succumbed to influenza in April 1926, and her final resting place is in Sofia. Abbott Hall, initially a girls' dormitory, was dedicated to Inez Abbott's memory in June 1927, a well-deserved and remarkable recognition for the work of a foreign female educator.

The Inez Abbott Women's Giving Circle is proud to carry the name and continue fulfilling the legacy of its exceptional patron.

Gifts of 10,000 – 5,000 leva

Anonymous Donor
Valerie Brackett & Nikolaos Monoyios
Vassil Chatalbashev '99
John Dougherty
Nedko Kyuchukov '03
Lyubomir Lozanov

Nikoleta Moldovanska-Alexieva
Marcie Ries
Svilen Spasov
Boris Statev '03
Temcov Foundation

The Boris Lozanov Scholarship

The Boris Lozanov Scholarship was founded in SY 2021-2022 by ACS parent Lyubomir Lozanov in honor of his father Boris Lozanov. The scholarship provides 5,000 EUR to a deserving student for each of the five years of study at ACS. The student's family must prove significant financial needs, while the student needs to maintain a GPA above 5.00 and excellent conduct throughout the course of study at the College. We are grateful to the Lozanov family for their contribution to education in Bulgaria and to the development of the American College of Sofia.

A TRANSFORMED ABBOTT HALL WELCOMES STUDENTS AGAIN

In 2019, ACS was awarded a grant from American Schools and Hospitals Abroad, a division of USAID, for the renovation of Abbott Hall. This iconic, soon century-old ACS school building, home to several academic departments and classrooms of the Liberal and Fine Arts Department, computer labs, academic offices, and sports halls, and also a favorite student location for many extracurricular activities, club meetings, and events, had not previously undergone a complete makeover. The award amounted to \$721,160 and required substantial matching of funds on behalf of ACS as well, since the construction expenses for this project would exceed \$1,000,000.



In April 2022, after the completion of a tender for the selection of a construction company, a protective fence was installed around Abbott Hall and the long awaited renovation began. Five months later, we are proud to have given a new life to one of the most beautiful and inspiring school buildings on campus; all electrical, all heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and all plumbing systems, as well as all windows having been replaced. All exterior and interior walls received new lining and all classrooms – new floors and new light fixtures. Abbott Hall is now a modern, environmentally resilient building with elevator access for people with limited mobility to all floors, and state of the art safety systems. Together,

USAID and ACS have made a huge investment in the improvement of the learning experience of our students and the development of ACS.



To help offset the substantial investment ACS made in the Abbott Hall overhaul, we are still looking for and appreciative of contributions to this project. We are also offering naming opportunities for different venues and classrooms within the academic building, as well as welcoming esteemed businesses and individuals to sponsor applicable student extracurricular activities. This way, benefactors would be contributing to the exceptional educational experience of the next generations of students at ACS.



This project was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this article are the responsibility of the American College of Sofia and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

ANNUAL FUND

The Annual Fund is the part of the operating budget that allows us to plan for the unexpected. Student activities, trips, and participation fees, faculty training and development, campus improvements and maintenance, additional anti-COVID-19 measures – all the little (or not), great (or not) surprises that our dynamic learning (and global) environment throws at us throughout the year depend on the Annual Fund.

Via the Annual Fund, you directly enrich every area of student life at the American College of Sofia.

In 2021-2022, the combined contributions of alumni, trustees, parents, and friends, which made our Annual Fund, amounted to **86,833 leva**.

The impact of your gift is felt in every classroom, every day.

Thank you!

The ACS Advancement Team



GIVING TUESDAY 2021

Giving Tuesday is arguably the biggest philanthropic movement in the world and a global event designed to inspire giving for value causes. We, at the College, believe that education is a vital priority, especially in troubled and uncertain times. For Giving Tuesday 2021, our third edition of the event, the community proved to us once again that this is a shared belief.

On the occasion of Giving (or Generous) Tuesday on November 30, trustees, parents, graduates, and friends of ACS from all over the world joined the efforts and raised **9,201 leva**. On behalf of the students and teachers, our sincere gratitude went to all contributors for all the donations, large and small, that helped the school community. This result would not have been possible without these heartfelt messages on behalf of the school's administration, Board of Trustees, faculty, and graduates:



Dr. Richard T. Ewing, Jr., ACS President (2015-2022):

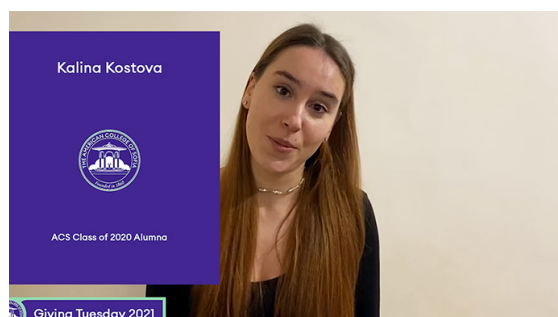
Of the many traditions and music, associated with the beloved American holiday Thanksgiving, I remember fondly one hymn in particular with which I have taken a little liberty:

*...For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies.
With these to all of you I raise
This my hymn of grateful praise.*

Even in this perilous era of the pandemic that has caused so much disruption and resulted in so much loss of life, I am reminded, at this time of year, that we have so much for which to be grateful. Among the great blessings of my life has been becoming a part of the ACS community. At this time of giving thanks, I want to express my appreciation and gratitude by making a pledge of support for ACS' financial program. As you know, this program makes it possible for talented students to come to ACS regardless of whether their parents can afford to pay tuition. Providing financial aid to talented and qualified students is core to fulfilling the mission and work of ACS. I give to support this program and I hope that you will, as well. Please join me on Giving Tuesday for the gift of thanks for the blessings we enjoy as part of the ACS community. Thank you!

Ian Yeats, ACS Geography Teacher (2020-now):

One thing that's been on all of our minds the past couple of years is the effect of online learning on our students and our community. I've been impressed and inspired by the positivity and resilience that so many of our students have demonstrated throughout it all. I believe that that determination and willingness to strive for excellence in the face of adversity is a quality that is highly valued here at ACS and it's one that you can help foster and support in our current and future students by participating in this Tuesday of giving. Thank you!



Kalina Kostova, Class of 2020:

In addition to an excellent academic foundation, the College has also provided me with a life-long support system and a chance to turn my passion into a career. For many of the talented ACS students that's possible through a tuition reduction and a big part of the funds for this tuition reduction are raised exactly through campaigns such as Giving Tuesday. So, consider being a part of it and help welcome those who truly deserve it to our community. Thank you!



Dr. Joel Studebaker, ACS Trustee (1980-now):

My connection to the College goes back to my late wife's parents, the Blissess, who taught at ACS from 1938 to 1942. I also met Dr. Floyd Black, President of the College from 1926 to 1942.

When I became a trustee bringing the College back to life was only a hope. Our primary responsibility then was maintaining the historical endowment that had benefited from past donations by ACS alumni and friends. Then, miraculously, the Iron Curtain fell and we

were able to re-open the College in 1992 with an inaugural class of 50 girls and 50 boys. The adept leadership of Dr. Whitaker and others enabled us to overcome some serious challenges in the first few years after the re-opening. General financial aid from the historical endowment of prior generations made it possible for many of ACS' first students to attend.

I marvel at the strides the College has made since then. The accomplishments of its students both in their time at the College and after graduation are wonderful. The construction of the new Campus Center and the purchase of Chromebooks for all faculty and students are examples of major investments the College has recently made in its future. Extending financial aid to students who would not otherwise be able to come to the College, including some from outside Sofia represents an important ongoing effort. Contributions from individuals and institutions have been essential for investments and to financial aid. Now, as 30 years ago, the generosity of alumni and friends helps ensure affordability for future students.

Dr. Krasimira Chakarova, ACS Physics Teacher (1994-now):

It has been my privilege and blessing to be part of ACS since 1994, for already more than 27 years. I have had the pleasure and excitement to work with some of the best students in the country. It has been a privilege to not only enter the classroom and see the enthusiasm of a large variety of students with different backgrounds supported by the College to work in a very rigorous environment but also to have had the chance to work and travel together with the best student competitors to places like Australia, Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and compete in world-wide competitions.

All of this has happened because there have been people who helped and supported us. We have the nice environment here with excellent colleagues, friends, students, and leaders but also people from outside the community who have given financial and other support to many of our science-related events.

On this Giving Tuesday, let me show my appreciation for your efforts to support the further development of our students at ACS. I strongly believe that it will give us a chance to embrace the best and most of the students from various backgrounds and welcome them to ACS. Thank you very much!



GIFT OF SECURITY

Philanthropy is the heart of ACS: allowing every deserving student to receive an outstanding education. Every school year, ACS fundraises in order to distribute **more than one million dollars of financial aid to students in need**. These funds are donated by generous alumni, ACS board members, parents, and friends of our school. The economic downturn as a result of the war in Ukraine, and the pandemic before that, takes a toll on many ACS families. ACS continues to receive a very high number of applications for financial aid.

We introduced the Gift of Security Fundraising Campaign in the summer of 2020 during the first months of the pandemic. This initiative has become an annual one since. In the months of July and August 2022, we carried it out for the third time, appealing once again across the ACS community to ACS admin, faculty, staff, parents, trustees, and alumni to join in the effort.

And once more, the members of this community near and far rose to prove that the ACS family stays strong and united and that we can rely on each other, even in these times of dire economic crisis. A record number of donors contributed to the campaign. Alumni who cherished their experiences at ACS or felt grateful to have been supported along the way readily joined in. Alumni, trustees, and parents gave in record amounts. Once again, many of those who had given in the past raised the amount of their gift and new donors joined for the first time. The word resounded everywhere where members of our community keep our mission at heart.

By the end of the campaign on August 31, 2022, we had raised an impressive **241,232.73 leva**, more than three times the amount raised last year.

On behalf of the families of current students, we humbly thank every donor in this extraordinary campaign.

Emiliya Stefcheva, Parent:

I am grateful for the high academic standards of education my daughter received at ACS. My daughter was awarded funding by the College when we didn't have the means to afford the full tuition. Now I am in the position to return the gesture and I will gladly give in the future. I hope more children have the opportunity to receive education in this prestigious school which to me and my daughter is the best in Bulgaria.



Gergana Vassileva, Class of 1998:

I am extremely grateful to our school for everything I am in life. For me, and I believe for most of my classmates, our time at ACS was a unique opportunity. The College taught us to strive for knowledge, to seek the truth, not to stop until we overcome the difficulties in our way and find the solution to the problem. It made us unbelievably good at test-taking, too. It gave us so much we can only wish other young people shall have the opportunity to get – the campus environment with its fresh air, all that space, the sense of security, the feeling that this place is ours; these are all things that one realizes much later in life. I loved the great extracurricular activities, as well as the competitive environment where being better or the best was not something to be ashamed of, on the contrary. Overall, we developed a different attitude towards education as a process, which in my opinion, few in Bulgaria had the opportunity to develop.

That is why now, when I am able to donate to ACS, I do it with great satisfaction, knowing that other Bulgarian young people will have these opportunities. I myself received a 50% tuition fee reduction throughout my ACS years, and in my last school year (of hyperinflation) that was even increased to 75%, so that I could graduate. I am grateful and want to give back at least some of what I received. Giving back is a great initiative which I think all alumni should consider.

THE ALUMNI IMPACT

Alumni play a crucial role as ambassadors, mentors, and benefactors. They enthusiastically return to campus for traditional events like the Christmas alumni reception and the summer anniversary reunion, and stay connected to the College and its current students and faculty through initiatives like the Student Activities Fund or the recently launched ACS Careers @ panel series. To make sure every deserving student is able to experience an ACS education as they once did and every great ACS teacher feels appreciated so they continue doing what they do best – inspire students – alumni support the various aspects of the work and mission of the College by donating.

In school year 2021-2022, the total contributions from alumni* amounted to **97,525 leva**. Compared to last year's 69,571 leva, this is an impressive 26.5% increase in the amount donated by alumni.

In total, **74** out of 2,947 alumni donated or **2.5%** of all ACS graduates 1997-2021.

Once again, the champion class with largest sum of donations* was the **Class of 2003** with an impressive 57,020 leva, followed by **Class of 1997** with 8,484 leva, and third was the **Class of 2002** with 7,637 leva.

Yet another year the **Class of 2002** had the highest participation rate with 10%, though this time around it was a tie with the **Classes of 1997** and **1998**, while the **Class of 2004** came in second with 9%, and the **Class of 2003** took up the third place with 6.6% participation rate.

These statistics do not include gifts made by alumni who are also trustees and are listed as such; in 2021-2022, 6 alumni served on the Board of Trustees. Including gifts by alumni trustees, total gifts from alumni amount to **126,720 leva.*

ALUMNI REUNIONS IN JULY

Over the summer of 2022, on four consecutive July Fridays, the College hosted alumni events welcoming over 200 alumni from 13 of the 26 classes that graduated since 1997. This was the first time in over two years when the College was able to invite the alumni to their home away from home. As recently arrived new ACS President Emily Sargent Beasley attended the last of these reunions, she “noticed the shared spirit and deep connection alumni had to each other and to the College. These alumni have much to be proud of and to celebrate. This pride and celebration reflects what continues to be a remarkable experience and while this experience has evolved over the years, its impression in its truest sense remains active and relevant.”

During their Anniversary and make-up reunions, alumni from near and far reminisced about their College years, met up with old friends, and added new members to their networks. After having enjoyed conversations about the College, their paths afterwards and their future plans, the graduates took a tour of the campus to catch up on things new and improved since “their years.” Everyone was eager to gather on the steps of Sanders Hall afterwards for their traditional photo, recreating the first ever photo they took as preps, “that many years ago.” The end of each alumni reunion night was marked by smiling faces, precious memories and adventurous plans. As a keepsake of the fun evening everyone took home the traditional Reunion T-shirt.



ACS CAREERS @ SERIES

In 2021-2022, alumnus Boris Statev '03, who recently joined the Board of Trustees, initiated a program called ACS Careers@, aimed at current students and recent alumni, who are still in higher education. The web-panel aims to provide inspiration and support in choosing a potential career path. The program is built around events where ACS alumni discuss – in an interactive and rather informal format with the attendees - what they do, the steps it took them to get to that position, the challenges they faced, and how they overcame them. In the discussions, the full breadth and diversity of ACS alumni success across fields is highlighted from natural sciences to arts to social sciences to law to public initiatives to technology to entrepreneurship.



The graphic features a purple background with a building silhouette on the left. At the top left is the ACS logo: a circular seal with 'THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SOFIA' and 'founded in 1860'. The title 'ACS ALUMNI CAREERS IN: BIG TECH' is in large white serif font, with 'OVERVIEW' in smaller white sans-serif font below it. Four circular headshots of panelists are arranged horizontally. Below each headshot is their name, graduation year, field, and company in white text. At the bottom, the event details 'SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2022 | 5PM - 6:30PM | EEST | ZOOM' are in large white serif font. To the right of this text is a small headshot of the moderator, Boris Statev '03, with the text 'MODERATED BY: BORIS STATEV '03 FINANCE, APPLE' in small white sans-serif font.

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SOFIA
founded in 1860

ACS ALUMNI CAREERS IN: BIG TECH

OVERVIEW

VESSELIN ARNAUDOV '01
INNOVATION LEADERSHIP
VMWARE

NIA STOYKOVA '01
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
GOOGLE

MOMCHIL ROGLOV '04
SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT
AMAZON

ENIO NAKOV '05
FINANCE
APPLE

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2022 | 5PM - 6:30PM | EEST | ZOOM

MODERATED BY:
BORIS STATEV '03
FINANCE, APPLE

The pilot, ACS Careers @ Big Tech, took place virtually in May 2022 and was attended by current students, alumni and ACS staff. Panelists Vesselin Arnaudov '01 (Innovation Leadership, VMware), Nia Stoykova '01 (Business Development, Google), Momchil Rogelov '04 (Software Development, Amazon), and Enio Nakov '05 (Finance, Apple) were happy to talk about their personal professional paths, to share insights about the relationship between education and career and to offer answers to participant questions.

Moderated by Boris Statev '03, the panel covered the various paths the speakers took, both in terms of educational institutions and majors, and uncovered the professional experience they gained in order to launch their careers in some of today's most renowned technology companies. The panelists unveiled their versatile and non-linear trajectories to success, reflecting on the diversity in education and experience that did help their headway. They also discussed and debunked some of the stereotypes associated with working in Big Tech. Another topic of discussion was the different experience of working in a large, established and well-funded company as opposed to a start-up. The panelists offered their personal experiences with tackling challenges and pivoting to new roles in different settings that ultimately led to their success. Vesselin, Nia, Momchil and Enio spent considerable time relating to their own activities and pursuits during their student years at ACS and how these experiences reflected, enhanced and helped shape their career paths and success afterwards. From their current standpoint, the panelists also offered tips on what the most important and attention deserving aspects of their life at ACS were and what others should not have been a source of superfluous stress.

The participants' feedback was overwhelmingly positive indicating that they found the event useful and enjoyed the rather informal and quite friendly atmosphere where alumni panelists openly shared their stories.

The next edition, ACS Careers @ Finance, is coming up at the beginning of 2023.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES FUND

The Students Activities Fund (SAF) started as an alumni initiative back in the spring of 2014. There have been 18 funding rounds over nine academic years since its inception. The mission of SAF is to support student projects and initiatives by providing financial help of up to 500 leva per project in the role of a donor agency, professional project guidance, and mentoring throughout the full project cycle. The aim is to build a community of committed alumni, parents, and ACS staff members who are eager to dedicate efforts for creating an environment of professionalism, citizenship and innovation, and curiosity outside of the classroom. Individual donors as well as institutional ones, like Fibank and New Bulgarian University with their long-standing support for SAF, empower student projects and exchanges outside the classroom.

SAF held two funding rounds during the 2021-2022 academic year – in November 2021 and in May 2022. Fifteen projects were introduced to the committee at the fall round and ten of them were approved for funding, amounting to a total of 4,297 leva. The spring round had eight project submissions of which half were approved for funding of 1,635 leva in total. The twelve groups of students, who ended up using cumulatively 5,252 leva to successfully implement their approved projects throughout the school year, presented their experience of creating, moving along and completing those projects – from an idea, through the planning, implementation, presentation and end results analysis – at a final SAF session in June 2022. Among these were traditional student-organized events like the International Science Fair FISSION, the ACS Model United Nations Conference, the TEDxYouth@ACS event, this time with student speakers only, as well as new initiatives like the first ever ACS Japanese Culture Festival by the Japanese Language and Literature Club, an API Programming Club Christmas Game Jam, and a series of design-and-sew-your-own-product workshops by the Fashion Club. Other approved projects included ACS-community-centered ones like the one supplying ACS female bathrooms with menstrual products to ensure increased comfort and safety at school, as well as projects reaching out to neighboring communities like the Helping Hand Club project that had little library houses (take one book – leave one) installed at the Pancharevo lake.

Supplying ACS bathrooms with free **Feminine Hygiene Products** was students Angela Kolarova and Katerina Hristova's idea, endorsed by their teacher sponsor Francesca Meo. The aim was to help improve the comfort and safety of female students and staff members while on their period on campus. The idea behind the project was to have tampons and sanitary pads available in most female bathrooms at ACS so as to prevent hygiene accidents and uncomfortable situations. This would be offering a quick solution and one nearby as the Doctor's Office's supply has a more limited range and is situated far from most classrooms. An awareness campaign with informative posters around campus and in bathrooms and an all-school email that got wonderful feedback took place before and in parallel with launching the project. Since, the project has been implemented permanently at school budget cost.

The TEDxYouth@ACSofia Conference, held in May 2022 and organized by Emma Tabachka '24 with teacher advisor Brenna Coldren, featured eight student speakers. In addition to creating a platform for bright young minds' abstract ideas this particular edition of the annual event was to help the ACS community members to reconnect after two pandemic online years. All 100 free tickets – 100 being the highest number of attendees allowed as per TEDxYouth license regulations – were claimed within 24 hours of announcing their availability. Speakers and attendees had fun and the SAF-funded delicious catering only added to the event's grandeur. Emma shared how appreciative she was of the guidance by previous ACS TEDx Club President, now alumnus, Mazen Meziad '17.

Thanks to initiative by Maria Matcheva and Alek Selveliev '23 with teacher sponsor Ian Yeats and SAF funding, ACS debaters from **The ACS Debate Club** were able to attend two online international debate competitions – Imperial Juniors 2022 and Imperial Schools 2022, held in February and March 2022 respectively. After a rigorous selection process, six ACS students – Alexander Barbov '25, Kaloyan Kotzev '25, Nikoleta Stoyanova '25, Spas Stoimenov '26, Valentin Katzarov '26, and Viktoria Karaivanova '25 – attended their first debate competition with some pretty impressive results, including third best team and best speaker. Two of the six later made it to the Bulgarian National Debate Team as well. To everyone's excitement, news spread that the ACS Open Debate Competition would be returning late fall 2022.

Getting more parents and alumni involved in the Student Activities Fund and its cause has been and continues to be crucial. So, parents and alumni reading this, our students would love for you to share your expertise and some of your valuable time in helping them develop their initiatives into successful projects, so give us a shout at studentactivitiesfund@acsbg.org.

The SAF Team

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

ACS students are committed to excellence, both inside and outside the classroom. In this past school year, yet again, they seized numerous opportunities to follow their passions and successfully compete in forums from all spheres of life and knowledge: from sciences, humanities, arts and athletics to creative writing, debate, and community service.



The sailing team of Andrea Kalcheva '22 and Marcela Miteva '23 of ACS performed in a staggering way at The State Championship Non-Olympic Classes Tsarevo 2021. After the Miteva-Kalcheva crew prevailed over all other men's and women's 420 teams, Marcela and Andrea ranked first and became state champions. This victory is quite impressive with all their hard work and additional hurdles associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in mind.

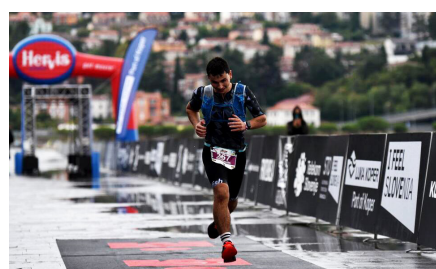
Marcela shared a bit about their journey: "I started training sailing 9 years ago, Andrea – 6 years ago, and we have been competing for Central Sofia Yacht Club Academic. One day we decided to become a 420-class crew, and we have been on the same boat for three years. We train at Iskar Dam, where the conditions are nothing like the open sea. After a month of really intense preparation, we succeeded in achieving the coveted goal of becoming state champions."

The cold and rainy weather in the early morning of Sunday, October 10, failed to freeze the smiles and warmth in the hearts of the ACS marathon runners, 9 students and 6 teachers, who took part in the Wizz Air Sofia Marathon.

Senior Christian Varbanovski is an actor, a singer, an YouTuber with 17,000 subscribers, and the Bulgarian voice of many favorite TV and movie characters, like Mike/Krush (*Ghostforce*), Lincoln (*The Loud House*), Steven Universe (*Steven Universe Future*), Dan Kouzo (*Bakugan: Battle Planet*), Bunga (*The Lion Guard*), Loyd (*Lego Ninjago*), young Ethan (*A Dog's Purpose*), Erick (*Noobe's*), Teo (*Atchoo*), Stibbins (*Dolittle*), Barbabravo (*Barbapapa: One Big Happy Family*), and Binky (*Agent Binky: Pets of the Universe*). Apparently, Christian, can do 25 different voices. In the fall of 2021, he successfully took part in *The Voice of Bulgaria* and even appeared on the *This Saturday and Sunday Show* hosted by ACS alumna of the Class of 2003, Petya Dikova.



Pianist and ACS tenth grader Divna Kanazirska won the Composer's Prize for her interpretation of the piece *Verloren* by Sally Wave at the online edition of the London Youth Piano Competition.



Senior Konstantin Peev '22 took part in the 2021 edition of IRONMAN 70.3 in Slovenian Istria, a triathlon consisting of 1.9 kilometers of swimming, 90 kilometers of cycling on a road (mostly hilly), and approximately 21.1 kilometers of running. Prior to his participation in this race where the swimming took place in the Mediterranean and the biking route offered amazing views, Konstantin had been preparing for three and a half months. He considered the triathlon the most physically and mentally challenging thing he had ever done in his life. He even had to fight serious technical difficulties with his bike for a good chunk of the race, still managing to finish within the allowed time limit.

Deyan Bozhkov of the ACS Class of 2025 showed determination in his performance in Taekwondo, as last weekend he won a bronze medal at the ranked G1 Albanian Open 2021. Following his gold medal in the 55 kg weight class at the State Taekwondo Championship at the beginning of the year, this is also Deyan's first junior medal in a ranking tournament.



In 2021, senior Ognian Traianov invented an application that can translate Bulgarian archaic and dialect expressions. The purpose of the application is to facilitate the reading of classical Bulgarian literature. Using a phone or computer, one simply scans an old unknown word and its definition appears on the screen. With just a picture, students are able to understand words like ‘дервенджия’, as an up-to-date synonym, ‘gatekeeper’, appears on their screen.

“I came up with the idea when they rewrote *Under the Yoke* in modern language and removed many archaic words. We took a look at this version in literature classes and thought that instead of removing archaic words, with the help of technologies we can preserve them but make them understandable for all students,” Ognian shared.

The app is free and in the fall of 2021, already had over 3000 words. The work on it took about 3-4 months, and Ognian's mother and classmates helped with entering the words. In early October, Ognian even got to present the application to Bulgaria's Vice President Iliana Yotova.

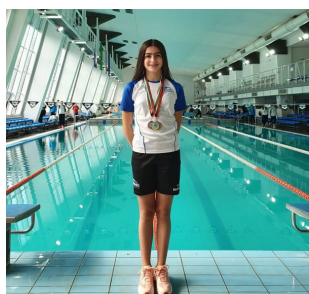
Ognian is also the co-creator of the Cyrlearnic app that teaches Cyrillic to English speakers. “There are many apps for learning the Chinese, Arabic and English alphabet. The Cyrillic alphabet has potential and many people are interested in it, so we decided to create an application for learning it,” Ognian shared. With the app, users not only see how the alphabet looks, but also hear how it sounds and practice handwriting.

In October 2021, the senior was working on two more new applications: improving a Bulgarian speech synthesizer to use new Microsoft and Google technologies to generate realistic speech in Bulgarian and an educational application enabling teachers to upload short videos with interesting information that they didn't have enough time to show students during class.

Despite his busy ACS senior schedule, Ognian also finds time to teach programming to small children and students his age. “At the American College, with daily tests and homework, I have learned to use my free time wisely and with meaningful projects,” he added.



Aleksandar Georgiev from the Class of 2025 won two bronze medals in the international Burgas Swimming Open competition which took place in October 2021. Aleksandar competed with over 700 swimmers from 5 countries in the fourth edition of this acclaimed tournament.



ACS student swimmer Mariyana Shalamanova '26 won two bronze medals (50 meters freestyle and 100 m butterfly) and a silver medal in the 50 m butterfly from the 10th International Swimming Tournament “Rusi Rusev.” At the 23rd International Tournament “Stefan Popov – Zamorata” held at the end of October 2021, Mariyana won 2 bronze medals - 200 m combined swimming, 100 m crawl and 2 silver medals in 50 m and 200 m crawl.

Aleksandar Georgiev '25 and Rositsa Karaivanova '23 also participated in the “Stefan Popov – Zamorata” swimming tournament. Rositsa won silver medals for 50 m butterfly and 100 m freestyle and bronze medals for 50 m and 200 m freestyle, while Aleksandar won silver in the 100 m backstroke and bronze in the 50 m and 200 m backstroke.



The Bebras - Bulgaria 2021 Challenge, which took place on November 7, 2021, is part of the international student informatics and computational thinking challenge of the same name. In our country, it is being organized by the Bulgarian Mathematicians' Union and Mathematics and Informatics Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. 251 contenders took part in this year's challenge, including seven ACS 8th and 9th graders. Among them Ivaylo Koprnikov '26, Kaloyan Stefanov '26, and Vasil Stoykov '26 performed notably, ranking 6th, 8th, and 13th respectively.

The autumn edition of the Sofia Open Informatics Championship for students, organized by the Sofia City Regional Department of Education, the Sofia Math School, and SAP Labs Bulgaria, was held online on November 15, 2021. Three ACS representatives, ninth graders Nora Paskaleva and Kaloyan Dimitrov and eighth grader Kaloian Stefanov, won bronze medals. The participants in the tournament, including two more ACS ninth graders – Svetoslav Ivanov and Martin Goranov – who did great, had 4 hours to manage their computer science tasks.

Kristian Milushev '24 returned victorious from the European Kickboxing Championship in Budva, Montenegro. As part of the Bulgarian National Team which came in second, the ACSer won a bronze medal in the point fighting category.



ACS eleventh-graders Martin Lozanov, Ivan Gyulev and Viktor Velichkov of team *PAPRIKA_V* and Teodora Marinova, competing on team *Bae Ivan*, performed remarkably at the international scientific Online Physics Brawl against 838 other teams from 50 countries and ranked 13th in their respective categories. The two teams featuring ACSers finished first among all Bulgarian Physics teams in their respective categories while in the overall ranking, *PAPRIKA_V* came in 76th and *Bae Ivan* was 38th out of the 839 teams in total from India, the UK, the US, the Czech Republic, and from around the world.

Physics Brawl Online challenges participants to solve as many physics problems as possible in three hours and is organized by a student formation from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at Charles University. The online brawl takes place on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic.

ACS 9th grader Kaloyan Dimitrov, who has many awards from Olympiads and recognitions from competitions, earned second prize in the Software Applications category at the National Fall Information Technologies Tournament “John Atanassoff” held in December 2021 with his project *ParoleMemo*.

At the end of December of 2021, the ACS Italian Culture Club donated over 33 kilograms of various essential, long-lasting food supplies to underprivileged households in Balchik and the surrounding villages. During the Christmas Spirit campaign, members of the Italian Culture Club, sponsored by Dr. Rositsa Todorova and Dr. Paulina Todorova, collected the supplies and had them shipped for distribution.

“ACS broadens our worldview and teaches us to help those in need in all ways we can and right now, during the pandemic, as even more people are in need, we were happy to do our part,” Club Vice-president Yanitsa Kaneva and President Rumen Videnov commented.



ACS Seniors Angel Karchev and Lilia Chatalbasheva took part in the discussion “The Artistic Person: Human Rights, European Values and Security” organized by the Bulgarian National Radio. The ACSers shared their vision for the future of Europe with the audience of the radio and the other participants in the discussion, among whom were several professors and students from the National Theater and Film Arts Academy, leading journalists, and other artists and cultural influencers.

In January 2022, bTV News aired a story about a holiday donation campaign by children for children, run by Zonta Club St. Sofia Next Generation and featuring ACS 9th grader Svetlozar Dimitrov. The meaning of giving, the way to overcome fears and the fulfilling emotion from delivering joy were discussed. In Svetlozar’s own words, “the thing that makes me genuinely happy is helping others.”

The ACS Model United Nations (MUN) Team earned an Outstanding Delegation Award at the Old Dominion University 45th MUN Conference (ODUMUNC 45) in Norfolk, Virginia in the US. The College was represented by 16 delegates who worked tirelessly and often well into the night due to the time-zone difference. The Conference featured 43 delegations of mostly native speakers, representing 83 nations. In addition to the overall Outstanding Delegation Award, Jasen Nikolov representing Cuba at the Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues Committee, was awarded Outstanding Delegate; Yoana Vladimirova of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, also representing Cuba, received a Verbal Commendation; Ivan Kamberov was named Best Delegate in his role of representing Serbia on the United Nations Special Session on the COVID-19 Pandemic; Peter Petrov, sitting on the International Olympic Committee on behalf of Pakistan, received an Honorable Mention; Angel Karchev, also within the International Olympic Committee, earned a Best Delegate award for representing Bulgaria; Sara Behar was awarded a Verbal Commendation for her representation of Pakistan at the Economic and Social Council, while Anna Hatchikian, representing the Central African Republic on the African Union, earned Best Delegate.



The national Young Physicists' Tournament took place in Kyustendil in early February 2022. The competition is experimental in nature, with the participants conducting scientific experiments in laboratories or at home. The contestants then defend their work and critique the opposing teams in what is called physics battles. The Young Physicists' Tournament featured three prominent ACS eleventh-graders: Teodora Marinova, Martin Lozanov, and Ivan Kamberov. In the final ranking, Teodora's team *Almukantarat* finished first, team *Daisy*, featuring Martin, and Ivan's team *Bergamot* both ranked second while Theodora, Martin, and Ivan won the respective medals.

The excellent performance of the young ACS physicists opened up spots on the extended national team for them, and the intensive training for it, which included monthly seminars on weekends.

ACS 9th graders Nora Paskaleva, Kaloyan Dimitrov, and Svetoslav Ivanov, and 8th grader Kaloyan Stefanov took part and won recognitions at the Municipal and Regional Rounds of the Informatics Olympiad. In the contested competition among the 9th graders in the second round, Nora Paskaleva placed 19th, Svetoslav Ivanov - 29th, and Kaloyan Dimitrov - 34th. Kaloyan Stefanov is 74th in the 8th graders' group. As a result, Nora Paskaleva qualified for the National Round of the Informatics Olympiad in March.

On Sunday, March 13, 2022, the American College of Sofia hosted the first ever Japanese Culture Festival at our school. Organized by the students of the Japanese Club led by Maria Hristova '22 and Gabriela Stanimirova '22 and their teachers, with the support and participation of the Embassy of Japan in Bulgaria and funding by SAF, the event attracted many from and outside of the ACS community. The program included a demonstration of a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, a Kimono presentation and dressing technique showcase, Japanese spring traditions discussion, a movie screening, and several student-led workshops on Japanese arts and crafts.



The ACS Japanese Festival was the result of the efforts of several generations of ACS students. Ms. Svetlina Georgieva, club sponsor and Japanese language teacher, shared that the idea was conceived back when the club was established. Now, after years of planning and months of active preparation, the dream of the Japanese Club came true and brought joy to many others as well. The club pledged all proceeds from the sale of souvenirs and matcha tea to the Bulgarian and Ukrainian Red Cross organizations.

In the words of then ACS President and festival attendee Dr. Ewing: "What a marvelous display of traditional Japanese culture and what a wonderful way to open our campus again to the broader ACS community and outside friends."



ACSers Rositsa Karaivanova '23 and Aleksandar Georgiev '25 achieved another remarkable swimming success. At the seventh edition of the Tsvetnitsa Swimming Tournament held on March 26 and 27, Rositsa won 2 gold medals: in the 50 m freestyle and 4x50m freestyle relay, 2 silver medals in the 100m and 200m freestyle and a bronze medal in 4x50m medley, where she swam the 50m freestyle. With his butterfly, Alexander won a bronze medal in the 4x50m relay.

In March, ACS 10th grader Nia Petseva returned from the European Youth Olympic Festival in Vuokatti, Finland, where she ranked 8th in the short track, earning the best score among all Bulgarian athletes competing at the event.

ACS 8th grader Martin Iliev won a bronze medal in his age group for his kata performance at the International Sofia Open Karate Tournament which took place at the end of March 2022.

Qualifying for the National Round of the National Geography & Economics Olympiad is serious business. However, ACS 10th grader Ivan Bliznakov made it look easy by earning 173 points with his knowledge and ranking 6th among his peers in Fifth Competition Group.



On April 14, the students from the New Hope Club challenged their peers at a jeopardy game on Bulgarian history, nature, and culture. Sophomore Ivan Bliznakov scored 290 points for answering correctly and quickly the most questions and won the competition. All contenders were awarded a certificate for participation, while the winner received a special prize.

The Bulgarian Language and Literature Olympiad is one of the most demanding competitions with extremely high requirements for the participants. ACS students Andrea Andreeva '22 and Niya Georgieva '24 earned spots in this year's National Round.

Four ACSers, Elena Baruteva '24, Viktoria Karaivanova '25, Atanas Bobev '23, and Valentin Katzarov '26 joined the Bulgarian National Debate Team in April. The coaching staff featured prominent debater and Club President ACSer Alek Selveliev '23.



ACS 9th grader Nikolaeta Stoyanova earned a Certificate for Excellent Performance at the National Young Talents Competition, organized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. As part of the initiative, students from all over the country develop scientific research projects and present them in front of a jury from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in two rounds.

After months of preparations and challenges, the ACS Model United Nations (MUN) Club realized another dream: hosting their very own ACSMUN conference. Attended by teams from Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the USA, and Brazil, the ACSMUN II Conference took place online on April 16 and 17, 2022. SAF funding covered the cost of the special no-ad Zoom accounts used throughout the conference.

The participants were addressed by Dean of Students Mr. Stephen Morison, ACS alumna and former President of the MUN Club Joana Nikolova '19, and keynote speaker Mr. Stefan Tafrov, one of the most accomplished Bulgarian foreign policy experts today, who has also worked with the UN since 2001 on various occasions.

The two-day conference saw many heated debates on the topics prepared by the hosts. Some of the questions discussed by the three UN Committees – the Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee, the Special Political & Decolonization Committee, and the Historical Security Council – were destruction of cultural heritage for political and ideological purposes, human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, privatization and sovereignty in Space, Western Sahara, the Suez Crisis, and the Hungarian Revolution. The Conference reached its successful conclusion with two resolutions by the Historical Security Council and three resolutions by the General Assembly.

The ACSMUN II Online Conference was prepared by ACS seniors Lilia Chatalbasheva, Jasen Nikolov, Petar Petrov, and Angel Karchev as a Senior Independent Honors Project, with the support of the rest of the ACS MUN team and club advisor Dr. Zornitsa Semkova.

Yoana Bogdanova '25 and two ACS teachers - Elka Veselinova (Math) and Alison Gauthier (Biology) - were among the 750 female runners that participated in the 2022 edition of the first all-female run in Bulgaria, Bioderma Women's Run, that took place on June 27 in Sofia.



ACS 9th Grader Kaloyan Dimitrov won first prize at the National Spring IT Tournament in the “Applied Programs” category. His project Swarm Guiding and Communication System (SGCS), aiming to provide a way for a swarm of robots to coordinate with each other and collectively accomplish a task without central communication, scored 141 points and won the top spot among submissions from high school students from around the country.

Another prominent ACS student, Atanas Bobev, earned an honorable mention for his project “Unpopular” in the category “Internet Applications.” This project aims at creating a decentralized network of amazing places in the form of a convenient map and corresponding data, a platform allowing every user to publish, share, and export different places in Bulgaria with their corresponding photos, geo coordinates, and specific weather.

Six ACS students participated in the International Arts Contest “The Colors of Autumn” in Romania, and three of them – Yoanna Laleva '24, Mila Koleva '25, and Martina Tomlinson '25 – won first, second and third award respectively, a testament also to the qualities of their mentor and ACS Art Teacher since 1994 Nia Decheva.



ACS 10th grader and striker for FC Slavia, Trung Do, caught the eye of FC Barcelona. He is among the great talents of the capital city football club and at only 16 years of age, already shows the qualities of a future world class footballer. He first stepped on the pitch when he was 6 years old and football has been his greatest passion ever since. “Football is my life. I can't live without it. There is an emotion in football that cannot be experienced anywhere else, and that I want to experience constantly, which is why I train,” Trung shared. He admits that sometimes it is difficult to balance the rigorous studies at ACS with equally rigorous football training, but so far he is succeeding. “If you don't give yourself fully when training, even if you do a million sessions, you won't achieve greatness. It is important to give your all and that's the only way you can become great and keep developing. Winning is a very good thing, but in my opinion, losing teaches you more. Stepping firmly on the ground after a mistake is the way forward,” Trung believes.



Five members of the ACS community participated in and successfully finished the Kaufland Sofia Half Marathon / RUN4EU in May: 9th graders Nikoleta Stoyanova and Yuliana Vasileva, 10th grader Darina Markova, Biology Teacher Alison Gauthier, and Math Teacher Elka Veselinova.

“Your hands are freezing, your legs hurt, you are covered in mud, your clothes are soaked from the rain, the only thing you hear is your heavy breathing and the splashing of puddle water. You have been wandering through the mountain for hours and somehow you are still accelerating with a smile towards the orange tents. You are flying.” That’s how crossing the finish line of the rainy Pancharevo Trail Marathon felt to ACSer Yoana Bogdanova '25, who ran the half distance in the marathon organized annually by running club Begach, while ACS Biology teacher and fellow running club Begach member Alison Gauthier ran the full 42 kilometers.



On June 2, ACS hosted a Games Fair where eighth-graders showed and later gave away their creations for gamified English learning to nearly 70 Ukrainian children. The Service-Learning Project in 8th grade is a long-standing tradition at the College and it is a way for the students to refine their skills while giving their time and effort for the benefit of society. It is humbling that this year their games will be helping children in an extremely difficult and complicated situation. As Jim Rohn put it, “Only by giving are you able to receive more than you already have.”

The largest book donation towards *Chitalnyata*’s campaign to collect 2,022 new books for libraries on the occasion of May 24, Holiday of the Slavonic Alphabet and the Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture, an impressive 583 books were collected by the eighth graders of the American College of Sofia in an internal competition between the classes. *Chitalnyata* is a modern urban reading room / library, initiated by ACS alum Alexander Shpatov '04.



ACSers Victor Nedelchev '23, Ognian Trajanov '22, and Dimitar Kostadinov of the First English Language High School, that together make up the leARN team, won the ninth edition of the Innovation Academy held in June 2022. The event, organized by the Innovation Starter Agency, is a hackathon with elements of programming and prototyping. For the first time in the history of the event, the first prize was won by students. The team impressed the jury with their idea for virtual learning content leARN. The winners received a prize of BGN 10,000 for the development of their project. In addition, the three students will be able to visit the European institutions in Brussels.

In June, ACS students from the Helping Hand Club installed tiny wooden book houses in the "Beach" recreation area at Pancharevo as means of improving its visitors' experience. The student initiative, done in partnership with the municipal administration, was endorsed by the Student Activities Fund and the houses were produced at the Student Computer Innovation and Fabrication Institute at ACS.

Some of the ACS student scientific projects our community enjoyed at the latest edition of the International Science Fair and Competition FISSION also took part in the Vienna International Science and Engineering Fair 2022. They wowed the audience and jury and earned these ACS students the following distinctions:

- **Superior Yellow Ribbon** for Kaloyan Dimitrov '25 and his *Swarm Guiding and Communication System Project in the field of Engineering and Computer Science*. Here is an excerpt from the judges' comments: "In addition to providing a professional interview, Kaloyan prepared an impressive and well-organized report, as well as a quality video with excellent visuals that clearly demonstrated the concept."

- **Best Video Presentation Award and Excellence Blue Ribbon** for Mihaela Tzvetkova '24 and Yassen Horozov '24 for their *Braille App and Writer App*;

- **Excellent Blue Ribbon** for Antoana Tsekova '23 for the *Analysis of the Effect of Antioxidants on the Efficiency of a Bioenergy Drink* and for Momchil Kolev '24 and Victor Ivanov '24 for their remote-controlled all-terrain robot *DC Explorer*;

- **Honorable Mention Red Ribbon** for Kalina Duncheva '23 and Bogdan Nalbanski '23 for their project on *Aspirin's Effects on Salivary Amylase's Function* and for Nikoleta Stoyanova '25 for *The Resonance in Infrastructure*.

In the summer of 2022, ACSer Martin Lozanov '23 took part in the International Young Physicist's Tournament as a member of the Bulgarian national team. The team won bronze distinctions in a competition with 24 other teams from around the world.

Hary Dikov '22 was among the authors of the short-story collection "Talk about Your Bulgaria", with official premiere on June 13, 2022. The collection came to life with the support of the Sofia Municipality within the Cultural Events Calendar of the capital. Two of Hary's works were published in the collection: *Zahari Belchev - the Restorer of Sofia* and the traveler's account *The Underrated Pernik*. Both were written by Hary for the competition *Reporters' Workshop 2020 - Book of Memories*. Hary is also one of the few participants whose complete works for the competition were published on the EspressoNews website and he was named Ambassador of the City of Sofia and a finalist in the year he took part in the competition.

The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) Masterclass in Particle Physics concluded at the start of July. Participating students and teachers from all over the country - among them ACS students Nikola Velev and Desislava Markova, president of the Particle Physics Club - visited the Sofia Magic Land exhibition, as well as the Discoverer Petascale-Supercomputer in Sofia Tech Park, watched a series of exciting physics and chemistry experiments, and followed the lecture by Dr. Steven Goldfarb, Head of the International Particle Physics Outreach Group (IPPOG), who shared more about how scientists at CERN explore the universe. Nikola and Desislava took the opportunity to direct their questions to Dr. Goldfarb, as well as to present some of the club's projects.

Andrea Andreeva and Chaya Belezhkova of the ACS Class of 2022 were awarded the National Diploma for outstanding academic achievement by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. Acting Minister Prof. Sasho Penov presented the prestigious diplomas to the 25 high school graduates, representing 19 schools, who completed the academic year 2021/2022 with maximum results in all subjects of the secondary education diploma as well as on the state matriculation exams.



CLASS OF 2022



It was on May 23 that the community of the College assembled outside on the green field to celebrate the Class of 2022. The Commencement Ceremony brought together the friends and families of the seniors, the ACS faculty and staff, as well as members of the ACS Board of Trustees. The Class of 2022 received their diplomas with well-deserved pomp and circumstance; as then ACS President Dr. Richard Ewing remarked, this was the class that went through the most challenges in the recent history of the College. They were the first class to study under an entirely new curriculum and due to the pandemic, had to do so in many different forms of learning.

The 26th class to graduate ACS since the reopening of the school, 2022 left behind a legacy of innovation in times of great adversity: they expanded the work of SCIFI, pioneered new initiatives as leaders of the Student Council, and secured new partnerships with organizations worldwide.

The seniors were greeted by Theodora Konetsovska '97, Chair of the ACS Board of Trustees, who reminded them that "it's better to light a candle than curse the darkness" and promised, along with her fellow trustees, to support, cheer, and make sure they would shine their brightest.

There to express her admiration for the hard work and dedication of the graduating seniors was also H.E. Herro Mustafa, Ambassador of the US to Bulgaria, while the keynote address was delivered by Angela Rodel, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission and leading translator of Bulgarian literature in English. Ms. Rodel opened her speech with a powerful performance of a Bulgarian reaping folk song and charged the Class of 2022 to use their voices with courage and passion, just like their ancestors. "ACS has taught you not only to speak English, but to listen, to write, to argue, to persuade, to inspire, in short to hone your authentic voice, in both your native and adopted language. I hope you use the incredible education you received at the American College of Sofia to become the eloquent leaders we so desperately need in Bulgaria, Europe and the US to build a more just and equitable society."



ACS Trustee and alumnus Nedko Kyuchukov '03 also greeted the graduates on behalf of the Alumni community. In her address, valedictorian Lilia Chatalbasheva '22 expressed her gratitude towards the core and the grander ACS community for making her studies a memorable experience. She congratulated her classmates for successfully completing high school and shared the most important lesson she learned at ACS, simple yet life-changing, on how to pursue happiness: "Always look on the bright side of life."

THE RETURN OF ARTS FEST

After a two-year hiatus, the renowned ACS Arts Fest returned to the College campus on Saturday, June 4, 2022. And with a bang! An ACS tradition dating back to the mid-1990's, this event is a celebration of the talents, dedication, and spirit of our students and faculty, showcasing various aspects of life beyond the classroom at ACS and at the same time raising funds for student extracurricular activities and financial aid. Guests at Arts Fest enjoy food, drinks, live music, home-made goodies, ice-cream, horseback riding and more, all of it against the unique backdrop of the summer College campus.

This year's Arts Fest contributed a record-breaking **10,793 leva** towards the school's financial aid program.

At Arts Fest 2022, guests were able to meet, learn more about, and support the many clubs that participated with a stand: among them The College Life Newspaper, the Art Club, *The Fountain* Literary and Culture Magazine, The Science Fair and FISSION Club, the First Aid, Chemistry, Time Heroes, Keep Our Planet Alive, ACS on ICE, Creative Writing, GSA, TEDx, and Book Club and the Student Council. Students at the stands gladly exhibited their activities and causes, sold printed copies of their publications and various home-made treats, and in the process, raised over 2,000 leva for future club activities and more than 1,000 leva for financial aid.

As always, marveling at the students in the renowned ACS Performing Arts Program was a highlight for Arts Fest guests. Excerpts from all productions of the school year were showcased and what a selection that made for: *Cats* being this year's musical, *Romeo and Juliet* being the English Drama piece, and *From the Bottom of My Teen Heart* – the Bulgarian Drama Program one. Additionally, guests enjoyed *The Magic Seekers* by the Dance Program and a fine ACS Vocabella performance. 677 leva towards financial aid were raised.



The Lynn & Linda Daft Open-Air Theater was once again the home to an exciting contemporary concert by talented and seasoned student performers with rock, pop, and jazz pieces, while the Gipson Library welcomed those more inclined towards literature for a reading by *The Fountain* Magazine student contributors. As is the tradition, Balkan dances in the wonderful company and light footsteps of teacher star Balkan dancers Ivaylo Lozanchev and Laurel Zmolek-Smith in front of the Sanders Hall steps topped it all off.

Wonderful prizes by the event's many generous benefactors were handed out in the traditional Arts Fest raffle. Special, heartfelt

thanks to those who made Arts Fest 2022 possible by providing raffle prizes - the Sofia Film Fest, Dermal & Laser Clinic, Fisto Commerce, Grand Hotel Sofia, Playground, Technopolis, etc. - and helping us raise a total of 2,247 leva from raffle ticket sales, 1,247 of them thanks to the 8th graders who carried out the raffle ticket pre-sale in the days leading to the big event, to the parents who baked and sold delicious treats at the parent corner raising 455 leva, to our student and faculty volunteers who sold ACS merchandise, coupons, and raffle tickets. Together, you really made a difference for all those ACS families who have deserving children but limited means. Thank you one and all! And here's to never having to miss an ACS Arts Fest again!

EXTERNAL PROGRAMS

Diana Zapryanova, External Programs Director:

External Programs is one of the ways ACS reaches out to the community organically. Like ambassadors, we popularize the pillars of an ACS education – lifelong learning, striving for excellence, and perseverance in achieving one's goals. We advocate the College's values – respect, integrity, responsibility – exposing an increasing number of people to them. We offer a first-hand experience of what it is to study at the American College in Sofia and why it is beneficial. We attract children with high potential, many of whom later become ACS students after having had a feel of the ACS culture by joining one of our programs. While teaching English, we also teach useful life skills like critical thinking and public speaking. Our programs prepare and stimulate learners to continue their education, qualification, and career at the highest international level and to achieve their life goals.

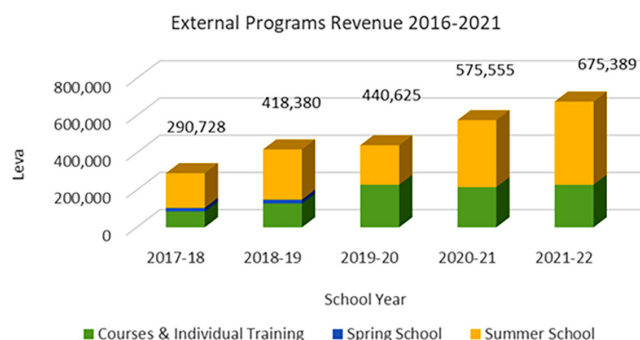
In the last five years, we've been very successful in attracting students for our various courses, our programs have constantly developed and become more popular and our students have consistently increased in number. Our year-long courses' revenue has increased by 170% since 2017 while revenue from our spring and summer programs has increased by 260%. From 134 students in total in the school year 2016-2017, we have grown to 563 in 2021-2022.

Although the pandemic-related restrictions created challenges for us in 2021-2022, we managed to keep the levels of enrollment in the year-long course levels from the previous year. While the number of kids aged 6-8 years decreased as a result of parents' fearing potential lockdowns, more students aged 12-17 years enrolled which made it possible for us to keep the revenue levels of that part of our program.

The remarkable summer of 2021 boosted our popularity and paved the way for our great success in the summer of 2022 when we opened as many groups as needed to accommodate all applicants. We took in 201 students and used 13 classrooms at the program's peak in July. With an overall number of 403 students for a period of eight weeks, the 2022 summer school is the absolute champion in the history of External Programs at ACS. 16 educators, teaching five major subjects – English, Art, Drama, Science, and Sport – made this possible.

One major highlight of the summer school was ACS's own maker space, the Student Computer Innovation and Fabrication Institute (SCIFI), opening its doors for our summer students, so they could experiment, design and print 3D models. Another one was the talent show at the Lynn and Linda Daft Open Air Theater that was an opportunity and encouragement for children from all groups (and some courageous grownups) to showcase their interests and personalities along with their musical, comedic, athletic, and dance skills. More than 20 kids participated, with acts ranging from break dancing to piano performances (Billie Eilish's *Lovely* by a 12-year-old on the piano was an absolute gem!). We loved the elementary groups' rendition of *You Are My Sunshine* and our intermediate groups shared their comic news report sketches they had been working on in class. Among the teachers who braved the stage were Elka Dacheva and Ivan Yanev, treating us to a Karate demonstration, and Lora Stefanova delivering a contemporary dance performance, so in line with our way of teaching by way of an engaging learning process, and better yet, by doing and enjoying the experience.

"It turns out that many Summer School participants come from families where one (or both) of the parents studied at ACS or have a sibling who is currently studying at ACS. Other parents learned about our summer school, and ACS in general, from colleagues or fellow college students. I was happy to hear questions like, "Do you remember me, Miss?" or "My sister/ brother is an ACSer." As someone who taught at ACS for 28 years, it would be safe for me to say that ACS has "come full circle," said Elka Dacheva, ESL teacher, who took on the role and did a great job as Director of Summer School 2022.



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Nikola Kouzmanov, Class of 2002:

"I want to help kids with the skills and drive, but without the required finances, have the chance to experience and achieve the high-quality education - academic and personal - that I believe ACS provides and has certainly provided me."

Gifts of 999–500 leva

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Lyubitsa Gerasimova, Class of 2001:

"I support ACS because I believe it provides the best well-rounded education in the region and also the best preparation for life in general."



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Kalina Manova, Class of 1998:

"I have only fond memories and boundless gratitude and pride for ACS, so it is a delight to be able to support its mission going forward."



Gifts of 199–1 lev

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CELEBRATING



In the 2022-2023 academic year the American College of Sofia celebrates 30 years since the reopening of the school in 1992. To commemorate this important occasion for the ACS Community, the school leadership launched an ACS 30th Anniversary Logo Design Student Competition. While all student submissions impressed the jury with their ingenuity, thoughtfulness, and passion, this original artwork by Vladimir Pashov of the ACS Class of 2023 was selected to help celebrate this significant milestone.

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2021-2022**

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