

Didar Muratuli's Story

Student Success: The Measure of a Teacher

Didar always seems to be smiling. His disposition is positive. He likes being a teacher in the Technology Department at the Kazakh-American Free University (KAFU). And he loves his students. He wants what is best for his students, especially a quality education.

Three years ago Didar attended the International Servant Leadership Program for teachers. The principles of servant leadership confirmed what his heart told him about teaching: "My role is to help support, not force my students." When they achieve their best, such as winning awards at the academic Olympics, he shares their joy and celebrates their success.

Didar knows that teachers who practice servant leadership must often "go the second mile." For example, he recalls a time when students in his class told him about a student who was skipping class sessions. When asked why, the student claimed that the cause was related to health problems. Other students told Didar that this young man had recently broken up with his girlfriend. He went to talk with the student. By going to the student, and helping him realize that his future was at stake, Didar was able to persuade him to evaluate his priorities and get back into class. He followed Didar's advice because he trusted his teacher.

Didar places great emphasis upon people and relationships, two of the core values of servant leadership. This means that as a teacher he must care as much about a student with a low socio-economic status as the one whose family has privilege and prestige in society. He strives to be a model to all of his students, demonstrating that each student has great value. As he says, "The influence of a teacher comes from one's example. In our department teachers share ideas and we bring students the things they need to grow. If a student needs our help as advisors, we stay with them."

Didar recalls a student who had severe speech problems. He tells the following story about what happened: "He came to me. I told him about my friend who is a speech therapist. I helped this student schedule a meeting with her. She discovered the underlying psychological problem related to his speech



Didar at his desk at KAFU.



Didar with some of his students at KAFU.



Didar and his family.

issues. The outcome was that the student finished his university diploma. He married and now has a daughter. He came back to thank me for his success in life.”

As a teacher, Didar likes working at KAFU. He enjoys teaching and he is happiest when students achieve good results. “This is my purpose in life,” he adds.

“KAFU can be a place that promotes a positive mentality. Those who understand that about our university culture , must help others achieve their goals.” Teachers like Didar are creating a servant leadership community that distinguishes the Kazakh-American Free University as a place where student success is everyone’s responsibility.