

# AN INTERVIEW WITH GUNAY ZIYADOVA FROM ADA UNIVERSITY, BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

Interview conducted by Marianne L. Gumpfer, Fairfield University

Gunay travelled the furthest of any attendee to come to NAGAP's 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in San Diego in April 2014. Curious to learn what motivated Gunay to travel over 7,000 miles to attend the conference, Marianne, who serves on the Publications Committee, recently had a chance to ask her about her experience.

## 1. As an international admission professional, how did you learn about NAGAP? How long have you been a member?

I found out about NAGAP while I was searching for international conferences for admission professionals online. I was mostly looking for conferences in the U.S. and I was very glad to find an organization that specifically deals with graduate admissions. Otherwise, most conferences were on general topics and only had some components related directly to what I do. When looking at the agenda and the topics, I found out that almost all topics were about my daily work and that the sessions covered everything starting from planning, marketing and outreach to admissions. I am not a member of NAGAP yet, but I am considering becoming a member.

## 2. I understand this was your first time attending a NAGAP conference? What made you decide to travel such a long distance to attend?

It is indeed a very long distance to travel for just a few days. However, when I looked at the sessions, I saw that most topics were of interest to me. Also, since we are doing our admission process in a way that is somehow close to the

admission process in the U.S., I was very interested in networking with other admission professionals. I think learning from your peers and colleagues is very useful.

## 3. How was your experience with the conference? What were the most interesting aspects of the conference?

I really liked the whole experience. The most interesting aspects were to hear the experience of different schools, both small and large ones, and to get to know the experiments done by our colleagues such as applying new procedures. Also, it was very interesting to learn new techniques for marketing and outreach.

## 4. Please tell me about your university? What programs do you recruit for and how many students are enrolled in your programs?

ADA University was founded in March 2006 by the Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The primary goal of ADA University is to prepare innovative global leaders who are committed to making a difference in the region and throughout the world. We offer 6 undergraduate and 5 graduate programs in diplomacy, international relations, public policy, business, and economics. Our total student body is 1300 students of which about 70% are undergrads. We also have about 15% international student body. Our international students represent 32 countries including Argentina, Ecuador, Norway, Serbia, Montenegro, Gambia, Cameroon, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Vietnam, and others.



## 5. How long have you been in graduate admissions? Please tell me about your professional background.

I have been working for the admissions office for 6 years and all these years I was responsible for graduate admissions. I started at the School of International Affairs, then did Business School admissions for 2 years and now I am responsible for overall graduate admissions at my university.

I have a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Baku Slavic University, Azerbaijan and a master's degree in International Relations from the University of Cambridge, UK. ■