

UAA ALUMNISPIRIT

Fall 2015 • ISSUE 04



UAA IN

THEATRE

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS | PEACE CORPS SERVICE | UAA DRAMA 2.0



Students and faculty take in caffeine and conversation at an airy, second-floor gathering place in the Engineering & Industry Building, which opened this fall.



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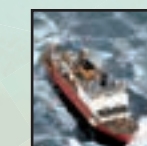
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ON THE COVER

Aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy* off the coast of Barrow, UAA scientists Jeff Welker and Eric Klein, representing the Arctic Domain Awareness Center, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence housed at UAA, used an isotope analyzer to "sniff" the Arctic air for signs of carbon this summer. (Collection of Dr. Pablo Clemente-Colon, chief scientist National Ice Center.)

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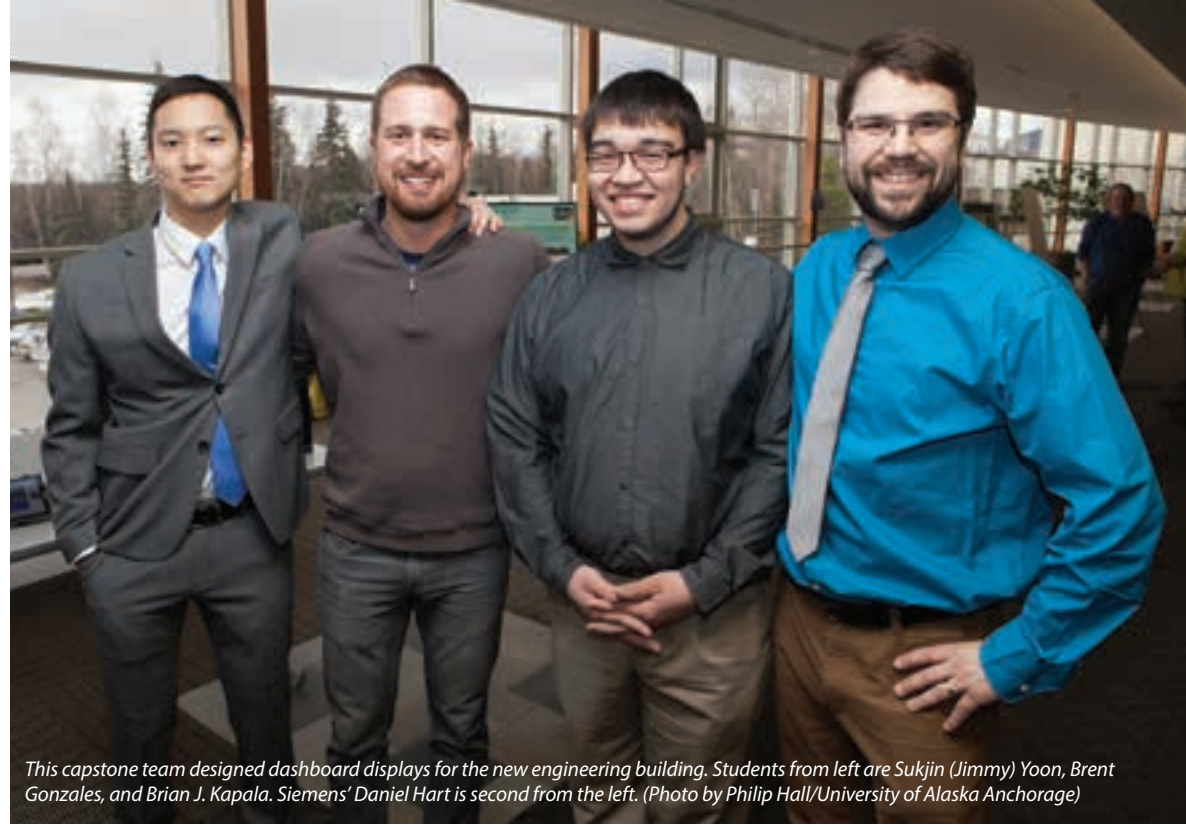
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This capstone team designed dashboard displays for the new engineering building. Students from left are Sukjin (Jimmy) Yoon, Brent Gonzales, and Brian J. Kapala. Siemens' Daniel Hart is second from the left. (Photo by Philip Hall/University of Alaska Anchorage)

FROM AN ALUMNUS



It is exciting to see the opening of the new UAA Engineering & Industry Building. This new space is a living lab for future Alaska engineers (page 18-19), where industry partners will mingle with students, share expertise and pose real-world problems that need innovative solutions.

During my time at UAA, professors, counselors, industry partners and fellow students supported my success. When I graduated, I made a commitment that someday I would support others' academic endeavors.

The opportunity arose when alumnus Daniel Hart (UAA Engineering '08) and I developed a plan to work with a student team on its senior project. The team successfully designed a user interface that monitors energy usage—to include electricity, water and gas—as well as other building data. Check out and try the interactive displays when you walk through the new facility.

I am proud of my own UAA degree and for the chance to give back. Thank you for supporting UAA.

Leverette G. Hoover
B.S. Technology, '97
President, UAA Alumni Association
General Manager, Siemens Industry Inc.-Alaska



The UA Board of Regents named Jim Johnsen, left, as UA president on Sept. 1, following the retirement of Patrick Gamble.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'm excited.

I'm excited for the future of our university, and the future of our great state. Coming to you from the business community, I know our knowledge base at the university is a great economic engine, a solution seeker and an idea generator capable of powering our state toward its bright future.

I am honored to say hello to you in your own alumni magazine. I look forward to meeting many of you as we share the resilience of community and creativity that is a hallmark of Alaska. And for the record, I send forth a spirited Seawolf H-O-W-L!

Jim Johnsen, *President*

FROM THE CHANCELLOR

We are off to a great year at UAA – you, our alumni, are an integral part of our past, current and future successes.

We officially opened the new Engineering & Industry Building that will support the ongoing need for qualified engineering professionals in Alaska. The momentous occasion was made possible by steadfast support and collaboration between our entire UAA community, industry and government.

This year's Green & Gold Gala has already raised \$72,000 for student scholarships and more pledges and matches are still coming in. Thank you for your generous support! Your continued involvement in our programs and activities helps keep UAA vibrant and resilient.

Tom Case, *Chancellor*

Nearly 78 years ago, a Louisiana longshoreman and his gospel singer wife welcomed a baby son into their lives.

Alonzo Patterson was born in Wilson, La., because his father, a sharecropper with a third-grade education, narrowly escaped being hung after clashing with an influential landowner in a southern Mississippi town.

“He was a man who had his own mind and didn’t mind fighting—or a little shooting, if necessary,” said Patterson, a UAA alumnus (B.A. Psychology, ’74), of his father. “He was a rough character, but a great man.”

Patterson was only 12 years old when he experienced the tumult of a family breaking apart—and felt a calling that set him on a years-long course toward the helm of Anchorage’s Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church.

That course first took him into marriage to his wife, Shirley, with whom he had three sons and two daughters while his military career moved the family to Texas, Arkansas, Hawaii and, finally, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Forty-five years ago, Patterson accepted Shiloh’s pastorship and grew not only a family there, but a mission—an outreach endeavor that embraces the homeless, hungry, sick and troubled, while growing economic, educational, health and mentoring opportunities for people from a rich diversity of origins.

‘WHAT WE DO SPEAKS ABOUT WHO WE ARE’

Patterson hopes to give a hand up to people who need it, to give them the tools they need to shape their own lives into the form they want.

“My aim is to use all of my life for the Lord,” he said. “I love Alaska, don’t want to leave Alaska. I want to die here, I want to be with my church. My greatest aspiration is to make a difference in my lifetime. Each of us has an impact. What we do speaks about who we are as a people, forms us into a community of oneness.”



SHE LEARNED EARLY TO “BE BOOTSTRAPPY”

To someone first meeting her, Katherine Jernstrom appears as polished and serene as the chic appointments in The Boardroom, a coworking haven she helped launch in Anchorage.

But look closer and you’ll see a woman who plays softball on what she calls a “beer-drinking league,” who crafted a retaining wall when she was 13 and later worked with at-risk kids at a wooden boat museum in Seattle.

In 2009, she sold everything and explored the glories, squalor and cacophany of India, Nepal and Southeast Asia—a journey that brought her and her future husband to the spires of the Himalayas and acquainted Jernstrom with the miseries of altitude sickness and food poisoning.

“That trip taught me to be less of a priss, not care about hygiene as much,” she laughed.

Jernstrom’s dad dropped out of high school, joined the Air Force, earned his GED and began working for Boeing.

“My dad, without a degree of any sort, rose up,” said Jernstrom of her father, who now lives in China (her mother is a nurse). “I learned at a young age that you have to be bootstrappy. There’s lots of people with really great ideas. What sets me apart are implementation, grit and follow-through.”

The idea for The Boardroom emerged when Jernstrom and co-founder Brit Szymoniak got together for a drink in 2013. “We were at Crush, drinking wine, talking about what we wanted to do,” she said. “We realized Anchorage had a lack of meeting space that was casual but comfortable.”

They hit upon the term “coworking” and, five months later, opened The Boardroom, which they hope will ignite ideas, collaboration and social change.

“It’s a lot of fun developing a business where you get to be around smart, creative, cool people all day long,” said Jernstrom, M.P.A. ’14. “It can be an emotional rollercoaster, but you could never do anything different after you have the creative control to decide what you want your life to be.”

FUSING EDUCATION WITH NATIVE WISDOM

A new superintendent can expect to grapple with a host of challenges when he or she first takes the helm—needing to engage students in learning while removing obstacles to their success, attract and retain highly qualified teachers and meet demanding educational requirements.

Kerry Boyd faced a simple yet much more formidable dilemma, however, when she first stepped into her job as superintendent for the Yukon-Koyukuk School District.

“The well in one of my villages, Allakaket, it just stopped working,” Boyd said. “They didn’t have water to the school, didn’t have toilets, had to use outhouses. It was very challenging for the students and staff. Most of the homes didn’t have water either—students and their families had to use honey buckets. We would haul water in for them and bring sanitizers, because when you don’t have water, diseases can happen. I feel the state should make sure every resident has water. That should be first priority.”

Nearly 10 years later, Allakaket has two wells and Boyd—UAA M.Ed. Educational Leadership, ’01—is still on the

job at the district, administering a 1,200-student statewide correspondence school and nine village schools sprinkled over a remote sprawl of land west of Fairbanks that’s larger than the state of Washington.

It’s impossible to drive to the communities she oversees, so Boyd flies out to visit teachers, administrators, parents and students in Allakaket, Minto, Kaltag, Manley Hot Springs, Huslia, Nulato, Koyukuk, Hughes and Ruby.

Maintaining those close connections is essential to Boyd’s goal of integrating school and community to provide a high-quality, culturally infused education for the district’s children. “The communities are very supportive,” Boyd said. “They want to help, want their children to have a good education and, after graduation, be prepared, but on the other hand also want to make sure they don’t lose their Native ways of doing things and maintain their values.”

Alaska Native culture is incorporated into the curriculum. Teachers take children to see elders and students spend a half-hour each day exploring the words of their native tongue.

“It might not seem a lot, but they’re learning their language,” Boyd said. “They want to make sure their children are still exposed to that.”



Kerry Boyd stands with her team of principals and directors at an August retreat in Fairbanks. (Photo by Monique Musick)

GREEN & GOLD
Gala

Green & Gold Gala returned to the Alaska Airlines Center on Sept. 26, 2015, for a black-tie evening in support of student scholarships.

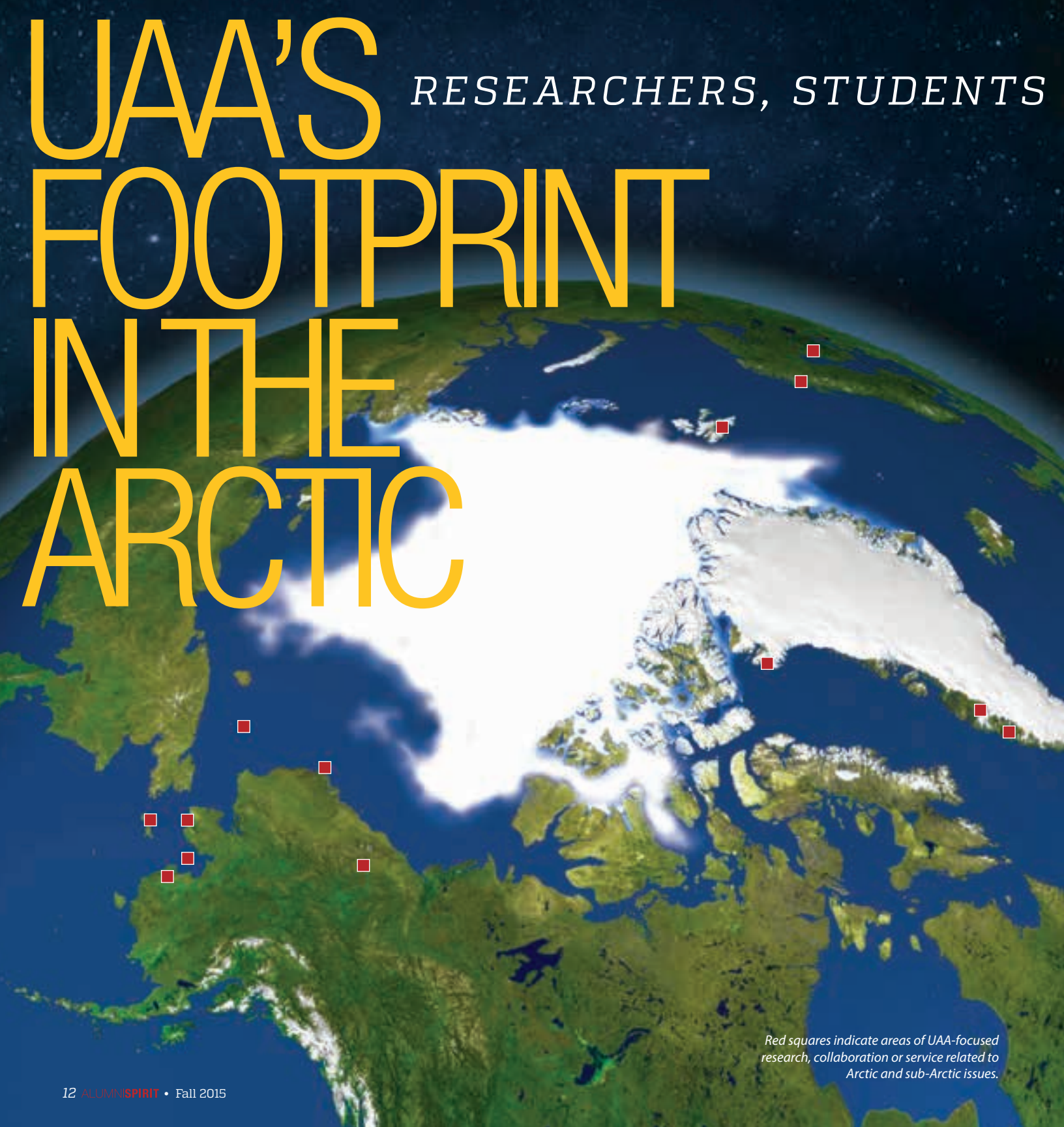
The annual Gala raises funds for the UAA Alumni Association scholarship endowment. The fund started in 1985 with a gift of \$25 and has now provided \$170,000 in the last six years alone. This past year, in recognition of rising costs and tightening budgets, the fund quadrupled its levels of giving, providing \$48,000 in annual support to four students from each of the university's six colleges.



Georgia DeKeyser

Viorica Marian

The Gala also recognized three outstanding Alumni of Distinction—Emerging Leader Mistee Davis A.A.S. '06, B.A. '12, Alumni Humanitarian Georgia DeKeyser M.S. '97, M.S. '99, and Alumni of Achievement Viorica Marian, B.A. '94.



RESEARCHERS, STUDENTS

UAA'S FOOTPRINT IN THE ARCTIC

Red squares indicate areas of UAA-focused research, collaboration or service related to Arctic and sub-Arctic issues.

TACKLE ITS PROBLEMS AND PROMISES

From a dissolving coastline—to offshore oil reserves as gilded as Prudhoe Bay.

From landlocked minerals that could power the world's cell phones for a century—to the drive for a northern port for shipping them to the world.

From troubled rural schools—to dreams of indigenous self-directed learning.

From kinship and artistic sensibilities shared across the North—to securing America's northern shoulder against human and natural catastrophe.

From the health and well-being of the one—to the health and well-being of the many.

These are the fierce challenges and tremendous paydays embedded in the Arctic.

With President Barack Obama's charmed late summer visit above the Arctic Circle, to the United States chairmanship of the eight-nation Arctic Council for the next two years, the world's focus turns north, and to Alaska.

REAL-WORLD SCIENCE

UAA's role is critical. Specific examples abound. **Jeff Welker's** Arctic ecology teams have documented climate change in plant life, effects of varying snow depth, methane release and more in Alaska, Greenland and Svalbard, Norway. For his research, Welker was awarded the distinguished Fulbright U.S. Arctic Chair in 2012.

Civil engineering professor **Tom Ravens** is modeling storm surges in Norton Sound, and hopes to expand his work to Alaska's full coastline.

Frank Von Hippel's ecotoxicology teams joined with community researchers on St. Lawrence Island to study human impact from chemical contaminants—those drifting north and those abandoned by the military. *The New York Times* documented his work on its front page.

Ecologist **Douglas Causey** is tracking and dissecting seabirds in the north Pacific to understand how they're adapting to global warming. He's finding changes in diet, and evidence of ingested plastic. *NPR's* Weekend Edition documented his work.

LINKED BY AREAS OF INTEREST

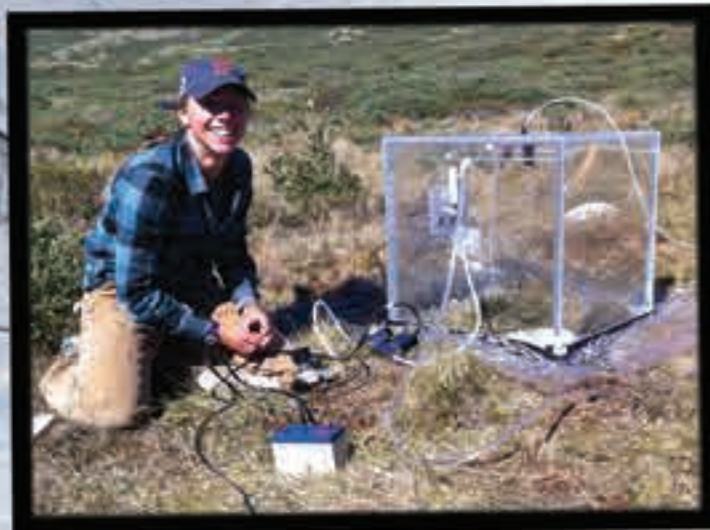
UAA is an active member in the University of the Arctic, a network of universities and research institutes focused on educational exchanges and Arctic research. Scholars gather around major subject areas like business, law and politics, engineering and technology, health and education. Many UAA faculty play key roles here.

Rhonda Johnson is active in the Congress on Circumpolar Health as well as the UArctic health and well-being network. She'll guest edit a special edition on "Extreme Epidemiology" for the Royal Society of Public Health.



Nothing says global warming like palm trees in Barrow, right? The leaves are whale baleen, the trunks are driftwood. (Photo by Diane Hirshfield/UAA)

Marie Lowe works to understand community viability in Western Alaska by identifying youth and young adults across the Bering Sea region who have pursued post-secondary educational opportunities. The overarching research question is: Do opportunities in post-secondary education for youth contribute to the viability of Bering Sea communities and way of life?



Graduate student **Cassandra Gamm** works at *Kangerlussuaq, Greenland*, using stable isotopes to examine evidence of shrub encroachment. (Photo courtesy Jeff Welker/UAA)

And in May, the King of Norway came to formalize connections between UAA and Norway's University of the Arctic in Tromsø. Both universities' leaders championed the wide variety of connections in science, engineering and public health already forged by individual professors and their academic colleagues. Leaders promised a commitment to finding new areas of mutual interest—from business to fine arts to indigenous culture.

Public health, rural education, resource management, climate change, artistic expression, resilience and sustainability, Northern well-being—all important issues in the Arctic and sub-Arctic—have been influenced by the work of UAA faculty and students.

Here is a brief look at evolving focus areas for UAA researchers and their students.

EMERGING ARCTIC CORRIDOR

Jeff Welker and **Eric Kline**, biologists and scientists with the Arctic Domain Awareness Center at UAA, in August took an isotope analyzer aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy* to “sniff” carbon shifts in the Arctic. Findings here could reflect changes in ocean productivity and contaminants from fuel/oil leaks and discharges, a technology the U.S. Coast Guard could use in transportation corridors and oil-exploration environments.

Other UAA researchers attend, present at, organize and host major international conferences on Arctic issues. This fall, local sessions included a Polar Law Conference on legal issues, the 2015 Arctic Science Conference on ecosystem challenges from resource development and *Relate North 2015* on defining the role art plays in a Northern sense of culture, community and identity. Organizers for *Relate North 2015* include UAA's **Herminia Din**, **Sean Licka**, **Steve Godfrey** and **Maria Williams**.

A year ago with **Diane Hirshberg**'s guidance, UAA hosted Arctic-FROST, a gathering of social science scholars from across the globe to focus their expertise on one question: How can Arctic peoples survive and thrive in a time of rapid environmental and economic change in their region? The focus was on human resilience and adaptation with a drive to answer a key question: What does sustainability mean to the Arctic community? Hirshberg will also attend Arctic Council meetings as a member of the International Arctic Social Sciences Association.

NATIONAL AND GLOBAL PLAYER

Just last year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security established a center of excellence at UAA, called the Arctic Domain Awareness Center, a funding stream aimed at developing technological tools to assist the U.S. Coast Guard as it monitors our coastline for human and natural catastrophes.



Relate North 2015, a University of the Arctic sustainable art and design symposium at UAA Nov. 4-6, asks what role art can play in communicating challenges in the North. An ice sculpture from a UAA Winter Design project says it in a word. (Photo by Herminia Din/UAA)



A GoPro camera attached to a balloon captures this view of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy* when UAA researchers **Jeff Welker** and **Eric Klein** were aboard, to “sniff” out carbon with a specialized isotope analyzer. (Photo courtesy USCG.)

While the world anticipates commercial and trade corridors opening in the Arctic, UAA civil engineer professor **Andrew Metzger** is imagining how the essential infrastructure might come about in lean fiscal times, perhaps through a port authority model. Without a viable deep-water port and functional search-and-rescue operations, commercial interests (like rich mineral deposits identified in Northwest Alaska as early as the 1950s) are frozen in place.

ALASKA'S NEXT BIG BOOM

Metzger calls these commodities still in the ground in Northwest Alaska our next big boom, just waiting to happen. “It’s absolutely huge,” says Metzger. “And oil is not the biggest. It’s No. 2.”

Even though oil doesn't top his list, he says publicly available information places the Chukchi Sea potential at more than a million barrels a day for 40 years. Metzger was among those funded by the federal government to look at design requirements for offshore structures in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas, work he anticipates will influence policy related to offshore development.

His Northwest corridor ideas will be a part of the November 2015 edition of *Alaska Business Monthly*'s special section on natural resources.

CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE

If or when the next boom happens, **Jim Murphy** and UAA's other experimental economists want Arctic decision makers to be ready. They have joined forces with counterparts at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø to co-create curriculum for a shared class on conflict and cooperation in the Arctic. They'll test a pilot this spring.

The Norwegians say they value economic experiments as a research and teaching tool and hope to duplicate UAA's success. After a decade, Alaska's lab is ranked in the top 10 percent worldwide.

Ultimately, plans call for both universities to offer the course, professors from both to teach segments, and students in Tromsø and Anchorage to overcome a 10-hour time difference to run experiments and collaborate on projects. Funding will allow for professor and student exchanges this spring.

This connection is just one example of growing links between UAA and Tromsø, as well as other Northern universities. Scholars across the North embrace their many existing collaborations, but promise to identify new ones of mutual interest; everything from business to fine arts to indigenous culture. Follow UAA's Arctic activities at <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/arctic>.



THEATRE ALUMNUS BUILDS ON UAA'S RICH DRAMA LEGACY

If there's a metaphor for what's going on within the walls of UAA's Theatre and Dance Department this year, a newborn might fit.

The actual baby is Hunter Hewitt, born in July. Dad Ty Hewitt started at UAA this fall, teaching acting.

A few office doors down, another new professor, Brian Cook, joined UAA to teach directing and theatre history. Come spring, he'll direct one—the ambitious *Stalking the Bogeyman*, based on Alaska playwright David Holthouse's childhood story of sexual abuse.

A third addition, Nova Cunningham, teaches acting, script analysis and community engagement in the arts.



Dan Anteau

Even the chair of the department, Dan Anteau, is fresh to his role, though as a UAA alumnus, he's doing a bit of an encore.

Anteau graduated from UAA with a bachelor's in theatre in the mid-'90s. He went on for an M.F.A. in lighting design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, taught in Hawaii and saw his lighting designs go up in New York, Alaska, Minnesota and even Africa.

But Anteau never lost touch with UAA, and came back to teach his passion in the mid-2000s. He now replaces a department chair who held that job for a decade.

THE "KIDS" TAKE OVER

What's happening at UAA's Department of Theatre and Dance is a massive changing of the guard. The legacy faculty who built the program—including the UAA Fine Arts building that opened in 1986—are now all gone.

Some, like Michael Hood, Frank Bebey, Leroy Clark and John Rindo, have been gone a while. The final big sweep—retirements of Fran Lautenberger, David Edgcombe and Tom Skore—finished last May. Poof! The “kids”—UAA's newer faculty—suddenly got the keys to the castle, a prospect they find both sobering and exciting.

Anteau is quick to credit UAA's legacy theatre faculty. He cites their mentorship, wisdom and abundant navigational skill, not to mention a wealth of talent and expertise. After all, they built this house, he says.

BACK STORY

Yes, we did, remembers former chair Hood, checking back into UAA by phone from his current position as dean of the College of Fine Arts at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He enjoyed pulling the birth story of UAA theatre from his memory banks.

Flashback to 1976, Hood said. A professional staff ran the Wendy Williamson Auditorium; no theatre department existed.

The Wendy's director was Everett Allen Kent. Hood worked as assistant technical director and stage manager. Other familiar names

included Ira Perman (later of the Anchorage Concert Association and the Alaska Forum for the Humanities) as the house manager and Nancy Harbour (now president and COO of the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts downtown) as an administrator.

“What you had was this team of arts professionals, all of us very young,” said Hood, and all with terminal degrees qualifying them to become faculty.

Kent had a plan. According to Hood, he had a conversation with the dean of arts and sciences, “and somehow out of that came a department of theatre.” The new academic department gave the Wendy's professional staff the chance to become tenure-track faculty.

Times were indeed heady. Hood, married and with two small children, remembered going from an annual salary of \$14,000 as Wendy staff to \$28,000 as a tenure-track professor. “I bought a pool table,” he laughed. “It was fantastic!”

But about two years later, the Wendy was more formally tied to the community college. Its professional staff had an option: Stick with the Wendy or move on to the faculty opportunity with UAA. Some chose academia.



UAA's production of *M. Butterfly* from the 2014 season.

Eventually Kent left, and a somewhat stunned Hood was in charge. “I was just three years out of grad school myself,” Hood remembered. “We were ambitious as hell.”

Hood picked up the charge for a new arts building, creating a coalition among theatre and arts professors that resulted in the current 104,000-square-foot, \$27 million Fine Arts Building that opened in 1986 with, as Hood put it, “the most beautiful thrust stage in the world.”

LEGACY

Hood and the others who joined him built a competitive department that toured the state and competed regionally and nationally. UAA productions have won 14 regional American College Theater Festival honors. In 1988-'89, *Tracers*, a Vietnam War-era play directed by John Rindo, won

national ACTF honors. UAA students performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

“Half the arts organizations in this state are run by UAA theatre alumni,” said Dawson Moore, himself an alumnus and director of the Last Frontier Theatre Conference at Prince William Sound College. Another is Bostin Christopher, lately of Perseverance Theatre and now an assistant professor of acting at Virginia Commonwealth University.

But there are many, many more. Check out tinyurl.com/AlumniSpirit for additional news of theatre alumni and classic images from some of the department's many productions.

And remember: All UAA alumni receive a 10 percent discount on theatre tickets purchased online by using the code: “UAAAlumni.”

NEW BUILDING OPENS DOORS FOR ENGINEERING PROGRAM

No square foot is spared in the new Engineering & Industry Building (EIB), which opened to students this fall. Located just yards away from the Student Union, the new central building highlights engineering in action, at every opportunity. From the exposed systems to the wall monitors to the big fiberglass golf ball on the roof (it's called a radome, used for testing radio frequency equipment), the new facility is an eye-catching—and much-needed—academic addition.

The original Engineering Building first opened in 1983, when both the College of Engineering and UAA were much smaller operations. As enrollment grew, the original building

could no longer hold the exploding number of engineering majors. For context, in 2000, the College of Engineering's enrollment was 305 students; 15 years later, enrollment had quadrupled to more than 1,250 registered students last fall.

Recent graduates may remember the program's evident growing pains. Labs were repurposed for multiple disciplines (as well as storage) and students squeezed inside, sometimes leaning against workbenches while taking notes for class. "There would be no place to sit," recalled assistant professor Andrew Metzger, who often had his students huddle around equipment in small groups so everyone could observe a test.

Things, thankfully, have changed. The new 81,500-square-foot building triples the amount of engineering space on campus, and the final product is a major benefit for current students. Lab designs focus on undergraduate teaching, as opposed to graduate research, meaning research opportunities are much more available for interested undergrads than at other state universities.

The entire building is a classroom—even the staircase was designed with a four-story gap so students could drop materials for impact tests. Expanded -30°C cold rooms allow for larger arctic research projects while massive flumes let coastal engineers test materials. Student clubs have a cavernous two-story space to build their electric dune buggies and concrete canoes that compete at nationwide contests. There are 3-D printers and small-scale wind tunnels and the entire building is "wired to the hilt," as assistant professor Scott Hamel explained. Additionally, elements of the building's inner workings are exposed as "engineering on display," allowing professors to show students how course materials are in play all around them.

When asked for the biggest benefit to students, Hamel discussed the ability to build off his lectures. "We didn't have the facilities or the space to do that before," he noted. "Now, in my steel design class, I can show them what it's like when a beam fails as opposed to just drawing a picture."

And not just students are benefiting. "There's a huge demand for a facility like this in the state," Metzger added, citing Alaska's one-and-only strong floor that has already netted corporate contracts. Before the EIB opened, companies would ship multi-ton projects out of state to test the load-bearing abilities of their materials. Now, they can just bring them to campus, saving time, fuel and money and giving UAA students hands-on paid research opportunities.

"It's very unusual to start doing research the instant the building opens," Hamel laughed, citing the immediate flurry of activity, even as contractors put the finishing touches on the building. Faculty and student researchers moved in months before the official opening, just to get a head start.

As the EIB opened, the original Engineering Building closed its doors ... but only temporarily. The former building reopens next fall with even more benefits for future engineers. Geomatics students will have enough space to move their surveying projects indoors. Classrooms will be

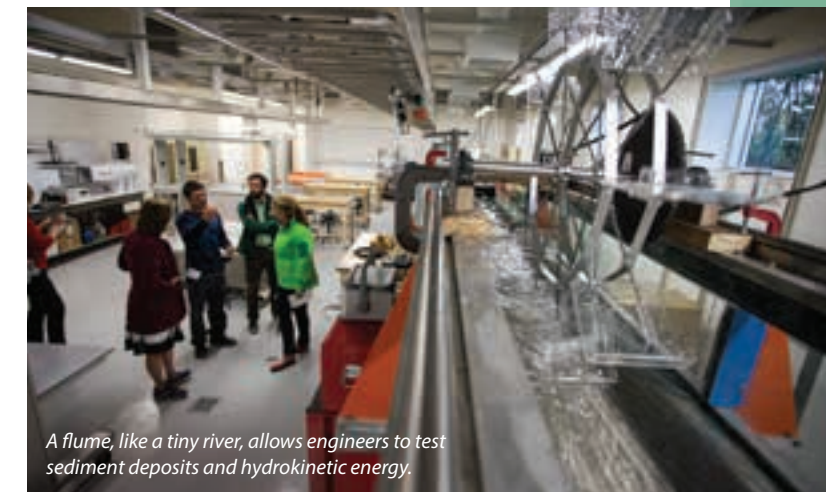


The new engineering building includes a strong floor for testing breaking points.

reformatted with circular tables to foster a collaborative learning environment and, as with the new EIB, the building's redesign will increase the focus on distance education.

All in all, the building is a boon to UAA's constantly expanding crew of future engineers. Labs sprawl across the ground floor, allowing for constant collaboration among projects, while a comfortable second-floor lounge provides a sun-soaked respite near the faculty offices. A new bridge spanning Providence Drive connects to the Health Sciences Building, creating an additional student lounge space on campus.

But it's the hands-on involvement students should be most excited about. "There weren't nearly as many opportunities to experience engineering before, and that [gap] was multiplied if you were interested in research," Hamel noted. "Now, if you're interested in doing undergraduate research, there will be *huge* opportunities."



A flume, like a tiny river, allows engineers to test sediment deposits and hydrokinetic energy.



ALEJANDRA BUITRAGO
B.A. JOURNALISM AND
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BURKINA FASO

MY EXPERIENCE IN BURKINA FASO

By Alejandra Buitrago

In July 2014, I was invited to join the Peace Corps as a community economic development volunteer in Burkina Faso, a Colorado-sized country in West Africa.

As I got off the plane, I learned that Ebola was still a very big threat in the region, and that my one semester of French 101 was going to get me nowhere. Along with about 40 other Americans, I stepped onto the melting tarmac of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. In our 20-foot walk from plane to

terminal, we were covered in dust and sweat.

After a week of orientation, we were sent to live three months with host families in villages on the outskirts of Léo, south of Ouagadougou. I went to Zoro to stay with the Sawadogo family. I met my host father under a mango tree, watching cautiously as he strapped my three pieces of luggage onto his bicycle, while a little girl carried my down pillow.

At the family compound, four women in a sea of colorful fabrics waited to greet me—the wives of my host father and now, my new moms. They each quickly took my hand, bowed their

heads, then pushed me toward my new home and closed the door.

My house had two rooms with clay walls, a blue tarp roof, table, chair, trunk and a bed with a mosquito net. “Deep breaths, this is only temporary.” As I lifted my mosquito net to crawl into this bed fit for a World War II infirmary, I crumbled. In the middle of my bed was a giant scorpion.

How could I have ever thought coming to West Africa after living in Alaska my entire life would be a good decision? I was hotter than I had ever been and sitting in a hut with no running water or electricity. I couldn’t communicate with my host family. They all spoke a

local language called Moore, and the only thing I could remember in that language was, “Mam nonga benga”—“I like beans.”

Go online to tinyurl.com/AlumniSpirit to read more about Alejandra’s Peace Corps experiences, including her eventual work with a women’s organization in Dieganao in southwest Burkina, promoting income-generating activities to stimulate the local economy, and her flight to India after Burkina Faso’s coup in September. As she says in her online story, “By no means will the work I do here solve the vicious cycles of malnutrition, disease and famine.... but I will make a tiny little dent, and that’s meaningful for me.”

SEAWOLVES SERVING ABROAD WITH PEACE CORPS

HERE ARE SOME OTHER UAA ALUMS
TAKING WHAT THEY’VE LEARNED TO BE
USED FOR GOOD VIA THE PEACE CORPS.



CATHERINE WALKER
MALI 2002-2004
M.A.T. '06

DAVIN HOLEN
MALI 1997-1999
B.A. '95, M.A. '02



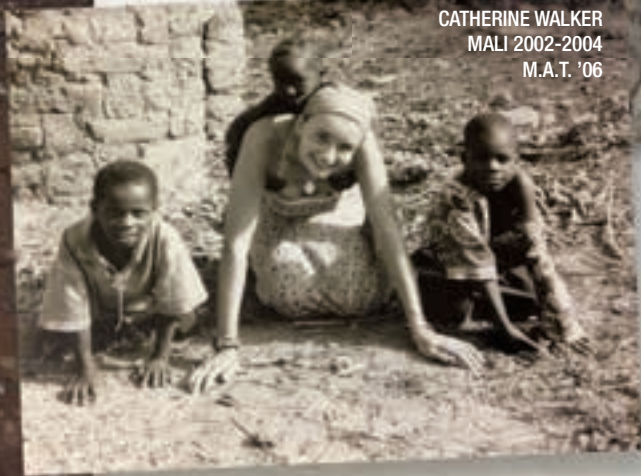
ERIC LESPIN
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC 1985-1987
M.P.H. '14



LISA MCGUIRE
HAITI 1998-2001
M.P.H. '08



HAYLEY CROW
MONGOLIA 2014-2016
B.S. '14



LÖKI GALE TOBIN
AZERBAIJAN 2008-2011
B.A. '06

The landscape is split between wedges of jagged mountains, massive spans of flat scrubland and blankets of rolling pine forests. Winters can be

bitter, summers can be roasting and there's always the chance for snow on the Fourth of July. Subsistence living is a vital resource for a large population, but especially in the communities scattered off the road system. There's a state-run railroad, three major cities and an ever-present mining industry. But instead of moose, they have camels.

With similarities spanning everything from geography to demographics to industry and lifestyle, Mongolia sure sounds a lot like Alaska. It's the least densely populated country (Alaska's the least dense state) and home to the world's coldest capital city. Is it any surprise that Mongolia and Alaska are academically and diplomatically linked as well?

"We have so many similar things between Mongolia and Alaska," explained Sainshur Ganchuluun, B.S. Chemistry '14, who graduated last year thanks to available Mongolian tuition waivers (more on that later). "It felt like home to me here."

Anchorage native Darin Swain, A.A.S. '12—a sergeant first class in the Alaska Army National Guard—dittoed that sentiment. "I just had this feeling when I was there that I was home to a degree," he said of his time in Mongolia with the Alaska Guard (more on that later, too).

But first, a geography lesson ...

Mongolia is a large landlocked country sandwiched between China and Russia. A former Soviet republic, Mongolia was the first Asian nation to adopt communism (in 1921) and the first to abandon it (in 1991). With a strategic spot between two contentious Asian nations, the relationship between Mongolia and the USA is an important one. Within the U.S., though, that relationship is strongest in Alaska.

Fairbanks is an official sister city of Erdenet, Mongolia's second-largest city. Population rank aside, both cities also share a buzzing mining industry and an annual temperature range that can only be described as extreme. As sister cities, any resident of Erdenet can attend UA

schools for in-state tuition rates, making UA a significant draw for students seeking an American education.

Sainshur originally hails from Khovsgul—a regular tourist spot known as the Switzerland of Mongolia—but moved to Erdenet at a young age for better opportunities. "My parents were all about education," she said. After graduating from a private high school, Sainshur considered studying in the USA, but the family couldn't swing the price tag. So she enrolled at the University of Mongolia, where a friend told her of the waiver opportunities waiting in Alaska.

"It was my first experience of America," she said of her move. Luckily, she connected with two other Mongolians—a nursing student and a logistics student—who helped her get on her feet. She estimates 20 Mongolian students attend UAA today. Now employed in an Anchorage chemistry lab, she's in a spot to lend the helping hand. "I really loved going to UAA," she said.



An Alaskan in Mongolia: Darin Swain, rides on the steppes.

SFC Swain is on the opposite end, having traveled from Alaska to Mongolia for a month in 2013. Every state's National Guard is partnered with at least one foreign military, and Alaska's Guard is partnered with—surprise?—the Mongolian armed forces.

Alaska's Guard regularly works with the Mongolian military in trainings, exercises and even deployments; Guard members have served in both Iraq and Afghanistan as advisers to Mongolian military units.

Every summer, several hundred Alaskans cross the Pacific for Khaan Quest, a weeks-long multinational exercise named for Mongolia's national hero, Genghis Khan. The annual

he made in Mongolia in 2013, and hopes to return in the future.

"Clearly, there are differences, but I see a lot of similarities," he said. "From a military standpoint it was very similar to the terrains I've worked in. I felt very comfortable there."

He recognizes the relationship as a benefit for everyone involved. "The biggest thing I think Americans need to understand is there's a whole world out there. Everyone doesn't fit

summer exercise allows for training, medical missions and, crucially, cultural exchange.

Each year, one unit is assigned to attend Khaan Quest but, thanks to Alaska's small population, many soldiers can return year after year. Swain is in regular contact with friends

in a box, there are so many different cultures," he said. "It's a huge benefit for our military and the Alaska Guard—any time you work with foreign soldiers it gives you an understanding about other cultures and being good stewards."

Swain hopes to return to Mongolia, and Sainshur will eventually return to her home country ... but it won't be easy.

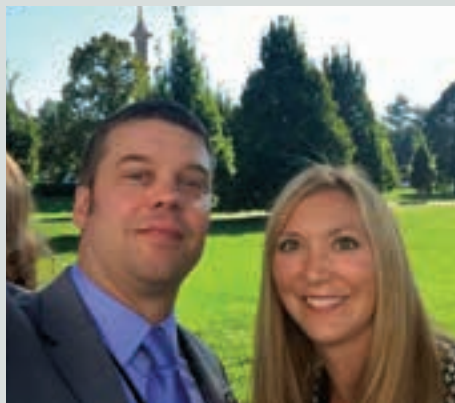
"Whenever I go hiking or berry picking, it reminds me of the hikes and trips I used to do with my grandparents as a kid," she recalled. "It's really close to my heart living in Alaska and now, after six years, I love Alaska.

"Whenever I go back home, I miss Alaska. I feel like I'm Alaskan."



A Mongolian in Alaska: Sainshur Ganchuluun visits Valdez.

SURPRISING TIES BETWEEN UAA AND MONGOLIA



ANSEP alumni join engineering faculty

Welcome back! Michele Yatchmeneff, B.S. '05, M.S. '10, and Matt Calhoun, B.S. '02, graduated from the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) and are the first two alumni of the program to return as tenure-track faculty. Both joined the faculty this fall. "I truly believe Alaska needs more homegrown scientists and engineers, and I want to be part of making that happen at ANSEP and at UAA," said Calhoun.

Summer at the White House

What did you do with your summer vacation? For two Anchorage teachers, their adventures included a visit with President Obama after winning the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Tasha Barnes, B.Ed. '97, M.Ed. '13—a seventh-grade math teacher—and Ben Walker, M.A.T. '06—who teaches seventh-grade science—flew to Washington, D.C., in July to receive the award, attend professional development seminars at the National Science Foundation, tour the White House and, yes, even shake hands with the President.

Engineering reunion launches Hall of Fame

Engineering alumni came back to campus to tour the new Engineering & Industry Building (full story on page 18). As part of their reunion, the College of Engineering alumni chapter unveiled its Hall of Fame wall, celebrating Sam Kito III, B.S. '88, and Mike Fierro, B.S. '89, M.S. '01, as its first two honorees. Sam, a current state representative, previously worked for the state as a facilities engineer. Mike has served as lead structural engineer for several campus buildings, including the UAA/APU Consortium Library addition, ANSEP, the Health Sciences Building and even the new EIB.



Mike Fierro and Sam Kito are honored as the EIB's first Hall of Famers, flanked by Chancellor Tom Case and College of Engineering Dean Fred Barlow.

Fire up the grill

Chapters took advantage of the summer sunshine to meet up across #SeawolfNation. The Mat-Su Area alumni chapter held its fourth-annual alumni barbecue on campus in Palmer, the Colorado Area alumni chapter met for drinks at a winery in downtown Denver and the Alaska Native alumni chapter hosted its student and alumni barbecue at UAA. In addition, the Alaska Native chapter packaged welcome boxes for nearly 80 Alaska Native freshmen who moved into campus housing this August.

Alumni mentors return to CBPP

The College of Business and Public Policy has matched its third class of students with local business leaders, including 10 alumni. The program pairs both graduate and undergraduate students with community leaders for yearlong mentorship programs throughout the academic year. This year's crew of alumni mentors includes Anchorage Chamber of Commerce president Bruce Bustamante, B.B.A. '99, Alaska Energy Authority executive director Sara Fisher-Goad, M.B.A. '09, and Rasmuson Foundation vice president Sammye Pokryfki, A.A. '96, B.S.W. '98, M.S.W. '99, B.A. '06.

UAA Dance Ensemble in Performance

Nov. 5–8 | UAATix.com

For one weekend only, catch the all-student UAA Dance Ensemble as it performs in several works choreographed by internationally recognized guest artists and UAA Dance program faculty.

UAA Planetarium: "Coloring the Universe" premiere

Nov. 20 | UAATix.com

Everyone loves an astronomy picture, but have you ever wondered if they are real? Do they show objects as they really look? And how they are made? UAA Astronomer Travis Rector answers these questions and more. Don't miss this look at how pictures are made from images the world's most powerful telescopes collect.

UAA Theatre: "Marie Antoinette"

Nov. 20–29 | UAATix.com

In David Adjmi's contemporary take on the young queen of France, Marie is a confection created by a society that values extravagance and artifice. But France's love affair with the

royals sours as revolution brews, and for Marie, the political suddenly becomes very personal. *Marie Antoinette* holds a mirror up to our contemporary society, which might just be entertaining itself to death.

GCI Great Alaska Shootout

Nov. 24–28 | GoSeawolves.com

The oldest continuously running in-season college basketball tournament in the nation, the Shootout returns to the Alaska Airlines Center this year. The UAA women's team will host George Mason, Pepperdine and Western Kentucky. Seawolves men will host Drexel, Loyola (Ill.), Middle Tennessee, UNC Asheville, San Diego, San Jose State and Toledo. Both fields "have the potential to be a who's-who among the rising mid-major programs in college basketball," said UAA Athletic Director Keith Hackett.

Alaska Airlines Governor's Cup: UAA vs. UAF

Dec. 11–12 | GoSeawolves.com

It's Seawolves vs. Nanooks in the opening round of the Governor's Cup. The series kicks off with two December games at the Sullivan Arena, followed by two March games in

Fairbanks. Come howl for the home team as it looks to break a six-year UAF streak with the Cup. Last year, the Seawolves made an impressive showing, tying the Nanooks 2-2 at the end of the series, but ultimately losing in a shootout.

UAA Theatre: "Eurydice"

Feb. 26–March 6 | UAATix.com

Dying too young on her wedding day, Eurydice must journey to the underworld, where she reunites with her father and struggles to remember her lost love.

UAA Theatre: "Stalking the Bogeyman"

April 1–24 | UAATix.com

The nationally acclaimed play *Stalking the Bogeyman*, based on Anchorage writer David Holthouse's true story, makes its Alaska debut in the Harper Studio Theatre this spring. Adapted and directed by Markus Potter, the play follows Holthouse as he plots to kill his childhood rapist. *NY Theater Now* said of the play, "Brave storytelling of a delicate subject—something you don't see often in the theatrical world."

Alumni will enjoy a 10 percent discount on all UAA Theatre productions if they buy online at www.UAATix.com and use the code "UAAAlumni."

CLASS NOTES

This page of alumni updates was compiled by Joey Best of the UAA Office of Alumni Relations. Please share your moments of pride and achievement via the link at the bottom of this page, so we can note your success in an upcoming issue.

LENS ON CAMPUS

1984

Jeff Roach, A.A.S. Agriculture, was selected to attend the U.S. Army 2016 Chief of Staff of the Army Senior Leader Seminar, a development course for select senior Army colonels. Colonel Roach serves as commander of the 38th Troop Command in the Alaska Army National Guard, and will be one of only 14 Army National Guard leaders attending the seminar in January.

1998

Sandi Keller, B.Ed. Elementary Education, earned the Teacher of the Year award from Nome Public Schools for the 2014-2015 school year. An Iñupiaq Eskimo from Wales, Sandi is married, has four children and three grandchildren, and has taught first grade for most of her career. "If it wasn't for my students, I wouldn't get this. I am very humbled and

honored to receive this award," she wrote.

2006

It's been a big summer for Löki Gale Tobin, B.A. Psychology. Not only did she recently accept a new job as the annual giving manager at Anchorage Museum, she also married Walker Gusse, B.S. Aviation Technology '07. The couple met during their first year at UAA.

2007

Walter Williams, M.B.A. Business Administration, joined Doyon Limited in July. He serves as the Alaska Native corporation's corporate controller, responsible for accounting and financial reporting. Walter lives with his family in Anchorage, where he also serves on the board of Catholic Social Services and Campfire Alaska, and volunteers his time with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska.

2008

Sarah Thompson, B.H.S. Human Services, works with developmentally and learning-challenged students in the Mat-Su Borough School District's 46 schools. In 2011, she graduated from Creighton University with a Doctor of Occupational Therapy degree, thanks to the Alaska Pathway

program—a distance education initiative hosted by UAA that allowed her to stay in state. Sarah lives in Palmer with her husband.

2009

Earlier this year, Candace Lewis, B.A. Psychology, received her Ph.D. in behavioral neuroscience from Arizona State

University. She also was named one of five Bisgrove Scholars by Science Foundation Arizona, an award that will fund her post-doc research on "the molecular mechanisms by which experiences can shape neurobiology and behavior." In Zurich this year, the recent Fulbright recipient also will complete neuroimaging training on characterizing the effects of classic psychedelic compounds.

2015

Jennifer Lorenz, B.A. Elementary Education, recently started a teaching position through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET), an educational initiative sponsored by the Japanese government. Currently, she lives in the southern city of Ōita, where she works as an assistant English language teacher.



Karl Wing, B.A. '12 Political Science, brought a new hiking partner with him to Mount Antero—Colorado's 10th-largest peak. He wrote: "After 22 miles of ascending, descending, reaching the summit, outrunning thunder, dodging lightning and enduring a sprained ankle at mile 12 out of 22; he did a great job keeping the morale up. The only catch was I had to carry him. Of course, I did not mind." Want to join the Colorado Area alumni chapter? Contact Alumni Relations at 907-786-1942.



SUBMIT A CLASS NOTE

Do you have some news to share? Your UAA family wants to know. Submit your news online at this link: tinyurl.com/UAA-ClassNotes.

UPDATE YOUR RECORDS

You can get connected with UAA Alumni! Update your information at tinyurl.com/UAA-Update so we can let you know about upcoming events.



The online magazine can be found here: tinyurl.com/AlumniSpirit.



Ok Soon Chin is a student in a UAA oral fluency class, which took part in making videos for Anchorage's "Welcoming Week" event. (Photo by Ted Kincaid)



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