

April 2025

# Elevating Impact

UAA's Commitment to Research, Creativity and Public Service

## Research Strategic Plan 2023–2027

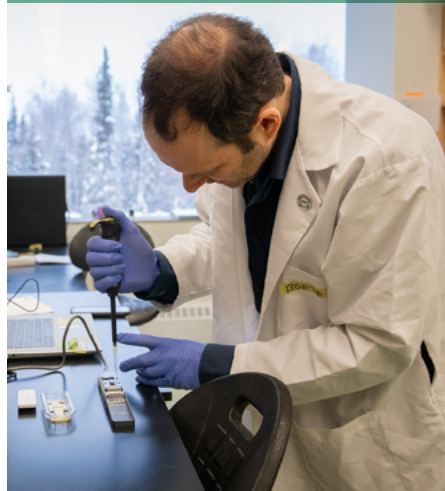
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### GOAL 1



*Create an ecosystem of opportunity and achievement to grow UAA's research, creative, public service and scholarly activity.*

### GOAL 2



*Make UAA's contributions through research, creative, public service and scholarly activity more visible, relatable and valued.*

### GOAL 3



*Ensure that students, faculty and staff involved in research, creative activity, public service and scholarly activity, are trained, supported and equipped to be successful.*

## Introduction

The Office of Research (OR) at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) operates to enable UAA's mission to

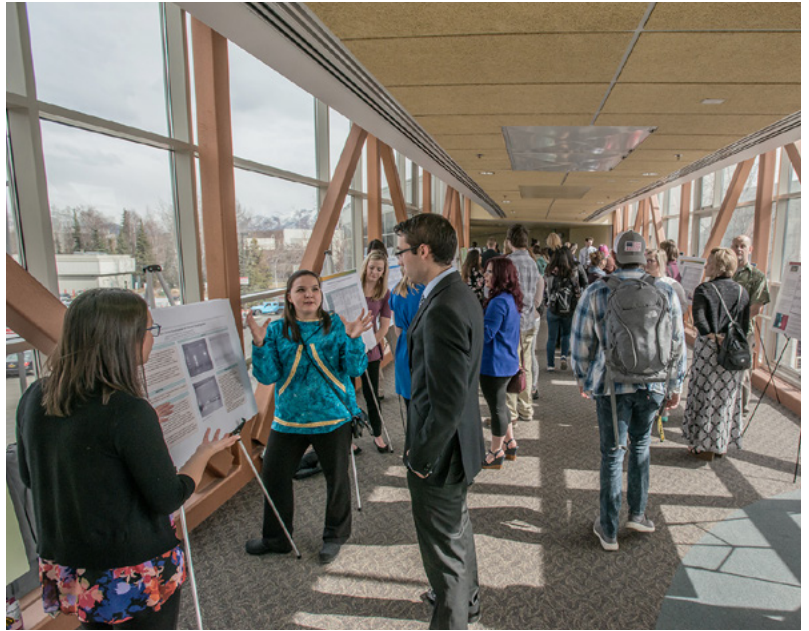
*“transforms lives through teaching, research, community engagement and creative expression in a welcoming environment. Serving students, the state, and the communities of Southcentral Alaska, UAA is a comprehensive, open access, public university established on the ancestral lands of the Dena’ina, Ahtna, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, and Eyak/dAXunhyuu Peoples.”*

UAA's mission is achieved by supporting all five strategies delineated in the UAA 2027 Strategic Plan:

1. We put students first.
2. We embrace our role as a trusted and respected community partner.
3. We positively impact communities and the world through innovation.
4. We accelerate excellence through continuous improvement.

*The overarching goal of the research strategic plan is to elevate the impact of UAA's research, creative, scholarly and public service activities, thereby solidifying their fundamental importance as a cornerstone of both a thriving UAA and our wider community.*

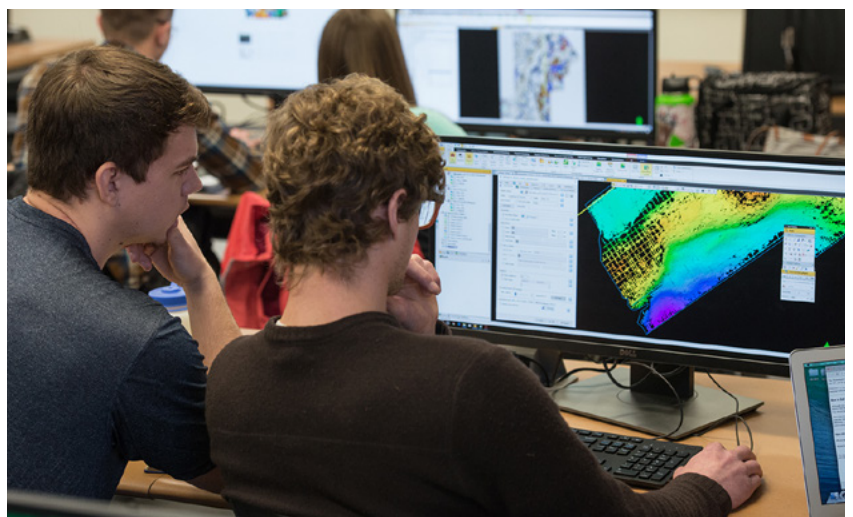
This document provides a description of the methodology used to develop this plan and strategic goals, the background for UAA's current “research” related status, and descriptive initiatives to be implemented and evaluated in parallel with the UAA 2027 timeline.



## Methodology

During the spring 2023 semester, Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) Aaron Dotson, met individually with 35 academic departments or department leaders on UAA's Anchorage campus and coordinated Research & Sponsored Program Planning Committee (RSPPC) meetings to develop a Research Strategic Plan. The VCR used different information-gathering approaches for academic units and centers/institutes (members of the RSPPC) due to their known operational differences. The draft plan was then reviewed and updated after review by the UAA vice chancellors, deans, and faculty and staff.

**Academic Units:** During meetings of at least 30 minutes in duration, the VCR gave a short presentation on the purpose of a strategic plan and shared unit-level data (e.g., quantification of scholarly dissemination, number and award amount for sponsored projects and other known relevant unit level highlights). About 20 minutes of discussion followed each presentation,



culminating in distribution of a link to a survey for faculty or staff to provide additional feedback. For those faculty that were not able to attend, the feedback survey was distributed by email via the researchers and faculty *email lists*. Notes from these discussions and the survey yielded comments that were attributed to a unit, not an individual. This feedback was used in the formation of the initiatives in the table following this narrative.

**Centers/Institutes:** Spring 2023 semester meetings were used to discuss the best approach and subsequent gathering of data from the UAA centers/institutes. Each center/institute prepared a description of their unit (i.e., history, opportunities and vision). The center or institute descriptions were made available for review by their peers within the RSPPC and then reviewed by the VCR. The center/institute descriptions and discussions from the spring RSPPC meetings were used to develop the included initiatives.

**UAA Cabinet, Deans and Faculty and Staff Review:** The draft Research Strategic Plan was reviewed and revised through three levels of independent review. These were, in order, the UAA Cabinet, deans and faculty and staff. UAA Cabinet and deans' feedback was collected in person during a face-to-face meeting as well as in writing after the meeting. Faculty and staff feedback was collected using an online survey tool during an open fall 2023 review period.

## Background

The UAA holds the Carnegie Classification of M1 (Master's College & Universities: Larger Programs) with a very high undergraduate enrollment. Further, UAA is the only organization in the state that holds an elective classification for Community Engagement which will expire in 2023 unless actively renewed.

Funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) echo the Carnegie classification delineating UAA as a primarily undergraduate institution (PUI). UAA ranks 274<sup>th</sup> on the NSF Higher Education Research & Development Survey (HERD), reporting just over \$21 million in research and development expenditures in 2021. Under current Carnegie classifications, this level of external research expenditures is over four times the minimum research and development expenditure requirement (i.e., \$5 million) for R2 (high research activity) however, UAA does not hold the R2 Carnegie Classification as UAA did not award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees or awarded fewer than 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees and at least 30 professional practice doctoral degrees in at least two programs.

UAA's externally funded portfolio expands beyond traditional research and development reported in the NSF HERD survey. For example, in 2021 UAA was awarded an additional \$20 million from funding streams that are classified as public service and instructional activities. Examples of public service activities include contracts with public and private partners to assist them improve their operations, organized sponsored public awareness and training campaigns, and more. Similarly, examples of instructional activities include summer internship programs, academic enhancement activities and sponsored student training.

Considering these two external funding classifications as well as a few other smaller classifications (sponsored instructional activity and academic support activity) demonstrate UAA's



diverse externally funded portfolio. UAA's total sponsored project related external expenditures (\$45.4 million) in FY 2023 exceeded tuition and tuition surcharge revenue (\$43.9 million) for the first time.

Further, UAA provides strong contributions in creative activity, research, public service and instructional activities using internal funding (e.g., general fund-supported faculty salaries and internal awards). It is the aggregate of these diverse, scholarly and impactful activities that create the whole UAA research portfolio, where the word “research” in OR embodies far more than the traditional definition. UAA defines the word research as encompassing traditional research in addition to creative activity and a large variety of scholarly activities, public service and training activities.

External funding/expenditures are often used as an indicator for research productivity. In the past five years (FY18-22), research expenditures have grown about 5%, whereas public service expenditures have nearly doubled. UAA's centers and institutes account for about half of the research and public service expenditures. Approximately \$1 million annually of UAA's total research and public service expenditures are spent on student wages, tuition and fees. While these statistics show growth, they are not fully indicative of the magnitude or impact of UAA's research, creative and scholarly activity, or public service enterprise.

Outside of external funding, extensive research, creative activity, instruction and public service activities, both originate and are completed through the time that faculty have dedicated in their workload agreements. Using fall 2022 as a snapshot in time, about 16% of all regular faculty and regular non-represented faculty time was classified under the “research and creative activity” workload category. This time is associated with an annual institutional

investment of about \$6 million in faculty salary and benefits to support these activities. Faculty used this time to pursue their related activities and engaged students through coursework or student volunteerism.

Some faculty published papers, books or conference proceedings, while others hosted exhibitions or shows. Additionally, some dedicated their time to community improvement through public service projects. Furthermore, certain faculty members noted that their related activities were specified in their workload agreements under “service” or “other teaching activities.” Although faculty comprehensively reported their dissemination and engagement artifacts in their annual activity reports, only a limited number of these artifacts received significant promotion within the campus community and beyond.

In recent times, UAA at-large has not set explicit aspirational targets for research, although some units or colleges have done so. For instance, in the College of Engineering's 2015-2020 strategic plan, they aimed to increase annual externally funded expenditures by 25%. While a pathway for achievement was established, various challenges, such as the level of investment required and monitoring capabilities, hindered their success. Therefore, the objectives outlined in this plan aim to lay the foundation, cultivate the desired culture and establish key milestones for UAA's path to achieving success.

Now is the time to build a strong UAA research foundation. While state funding continues to be a challenge, the federal government has been steadily increasing funding opportunities for research and development, developing STEM talent



and creating specific funding programs to help institutions such as UAA build research capacity. For example, the CHIPS and Science Act set a goal of growing NSF's EPSCoR funding to account for 20% of NSF's overall budget and created multiple programs to help Emerging Research Institutions (ERIs), for which UAA qualifies, to build research administrative capacity, enhance faculty support and implement strategies to engage and retain students in STEM. Additionally, the NIH has developed the Research Enhancement Award (R15 mechanism) to support research at educational institutions that provide baccalaureate or advanced degrees but that have not been major recipients of NIH support. Since its 1986, the NIH has funded eighteen R15 awards to researchers at UAA totaling \$4.6 million total costs. With the right foundation in place, UAA can be highly competitive for these and many other opportunities in the future.

UAA has experienced ups and downs in the past 10 years university-wide with leadership changes at nearly all levels (i.e., department, center/institute, college and university). This instability has created concern among faculty and staff survey respondents as characterized by the survey used in preparing this document. While some academic faculty or staff feel well-supported, others do not. Some direct their concerns at unit or university level leadership, others direct it at operational administration, and many feel they simply do not know where to start or it is too complex to pursue research and creative activity beyond that which they can initiate and perform without

the support of others. Centers/institutes that operate primarily on external funds reported slightly different concerns, which were largely associated with centralized administration support as well as concerns that their role and operational approach is not fully understood by leadership.

*Thus, the goals of this research strategic plan are practical, focusing on building the cultural foundation and the strong and resilient systems necessary to pursue highly aspirational activities during the next strategic plan period.*

## Overarching Goals of the Research Strategic Plan

1. Create an ecosystem of opportunity and achievement to grow UAA's research, creative, public service and scholarly activity
2. Make UAA's contributions through research, creative, public service and scholarly activity more visible, relatable and valued
3. Ensure that students, faculty and staff involved in research, creative activity, public service and scholarly activity, are trained, supported and equipped to be successful

Each goal will have associated objectives, activities and desired outcomes. These are articulated in the following tables and will be coordinated/tracked using the Sample Monitoring and Report Sheet at the end of this document. Supporting data and documentation used to develop this document is available upon request.



**GOAL 1**

**Create an ecosystem of opportunity and achievement to grow UAA’s research, creative, public service and scholarly activity.**

UAA 2027 Alignment — Primary: **Impact through innovation** Secondary: **Putting students first** Tertiary: **Community partner**

Objectives	Outcome	Activity	Start to End	Annual Measurement & Reporting
<b>A</b> Regular and significant opportunities for internal teaming are made available	UAA faculty and staff are regularly contacted and supported by OR to participate in paired and partnered pursuits of research ideas and activities.	Faculty and staff teams are aligned and invited by OR to engage in specific opportunities.	Aug. 23–27	1) Number of opportunities communicated 2) Number of opportunities teamed and submitted
		OR will identify and share opportunities as well as assist faculty and staff in coordination of teams upon their request.	Aug. 23–27	1) Number of requests received 2) Number of teams coordinated
<b>B</b> Regular dissemination of internal and external opportunities that will support research, creative and scholarly activity	UAA faculty and staff are aware of opportunities that could grow their cause in alignment with UAA mission and vision.	OR sends regular communication, broadly and on an individualized basis, to faculty and staff about opportunities via newsletters, email lists, and other electronic communications.	Aug. 23–27	Number of opportunities communicated (e.g., researchers list serve opportunities communications, InfoReady or Pivot postings)
<b>C</b> Evaluate and implement incentives for related research, creative and scholarly achievements	UAA faculty and staff receive internal recognition for their achievements in research, creative and scholarly achievements.	Create a short-term faculty and staff committee to determine type and frequency of faculty and staff recognition	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	1) Committee endorsed recommendation Letter delineating incentive options and mechanisms of dissemination. 2) Monitor and measure uptake and use of recommendations
		Develop and implement a recognition plan	Jan. 24–Aug. 27	1) Plan developed and published 2) Number of recognitions provided
<b>D</b> Create a robust undergraduate research program to attract and distribute available donor funds and create cohesion between existing sponsored and unsponsored undergraduate research programs	UAA embraces our current role as a primarily undergraduate institution (PUI) and empowers our students through undergraduate research, creative and scholarly activity.	Create a short-term faculty and staff committee to propose operational management structure of UAA undergraduate research funding, related activity coordination, etc.	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	1) Committee endorsed recommendation letter delineating an ideal operational management structure and activities 2) Monitor and measure uptake and use of recommendations
		Develop and implement an undergraduate research plan.	Jan. 24–Aug. 27	1) Plan developed and published 2) Monitoring metrics from plan TBD
<b>E</b> Enable Graduate School dean and academic deans to promote faculty guided/supported graduate student research, creative and scholarly activities	UAA’s graduate students are provided opportunities to pursue and perform research, creative and scholarly activity under an empowered faculty.	Meet regularly with Graduate School dean and academic deans to discuss unit level opportunities and address challenges	Aug. 23–27	1) Document meeting outcomes that lead to action 2) Document delineated action and action progress
<b>F</b> UAA’s sponsored centers/institutes will operate effectively, both financially and programmatically, coordinating with other peer-sponsored centers/institutes.  Sponsored Centers/Institutes include ISER, CHD, AHEC, ICHS, CWA, BEI, ACCS, ENRI and ANSEP.	UAA’s sponsored centers/institutes are empowered to grow and are invested in and supported to achieve goals in alignment with UAA 2027.	Maintain regular coordination between sponsored centers/institutes to identify and improve operations	Aug. 23–27	Documentation of regular meetings (e.g. RSPPC)
		Define and monitor center/institute level strategic goals and metrics	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	1) Individualized plans developed and reviewed 2) Individual metrics shared and monitored
		Improve UAA web presence of centers/institutes	Aug. 23–May 24	Add centers/Institutes and research labs in a highly accessible manner to UAAs OR website under primary research tab
		Create and implement a center/institute promotion and development plan	Aug 23–27	1) Develop a plan for overarching center/institute goals 2) Monitor metrics TBD with the plan

# GOAL 2

**Make UAA's contribution to research, creative, public service and scholarly activity more visible, relatable and valued.**

**UAA 2027 Alignment - Primary: Excellence through continuous improvement Secondary: Impact through innovation Tertiary: Excellence through continuous improvement**

Objectives	Outcome	Activity	Start to End	Annual Measurement & Reporting
<b>A</b> Capture awards, artifacts and dissemination products such that they can be used for promotion, accreditation and other purposes in alignment with UAA 2027	UAA's outputs are gathered and organized in a manner to be effectively used for a variety of purposes for the benefit of our future.	Create a short-term faculty and staff committee to assess options and propose a solution	Aug. 23–May 24	Recommendation Letter
		OR will implement means of capture	Aug. 24–27	1) Count of faculty and staff participation 2) Count of artifacts captured
		OR will assess operational functionality by creating, disseminating, and analyzing results of a user satisfaction survey	Aug. 25–27	Annual user satisfaction survey
<b>B</b> Improve UAA's internal awareness and recognition of value, of research, creative, public service and related scholarly activity	UAA faculty and staff are in the know and can act as community influencers sharing UAA's activities.	Develop internal communications plan	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	Written plan created
		Implement internal communications plan	Jan. 24–Aug. 27	Number of communications distributed
		Annually identify and train UAA influencers	Aug. 23–27	Number of active UAA influencers
	UAA faculty and staff have the tools to independently identify potential internal partners and direct opportunities to colleagues.	Create a short-term faculty and staff committee to assess how to gather and assess UAA skillset	Aug. 23–May 24	Committee endorsed recommendation letter delineating potential implementation options.
		Implement necessary tool to enable UAA skillset to be identified	Aug. 24–27	Monitor and measure uptake and use of recommendations.
		Assess operational functionality	Aug. 25–27	Annual user satisfaction survey
<b>C</b> Improve UAA's external reputation by promoting UAA's research, creative and related scholarly activity through coordinated communication	UAA's research, creative and related scholarly activity is known, and we are requested to serve our community.	Develop external communications plan	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	Written plan created
		Implement external communications plan	Jan. 24–Aug. 27	Number of communications distributed
<b>D</b> Evaluate the relationship between our current classifications (e.g., Carnegie, PUI, etc.) and our research portfolio, and opportunities, and challenges in targeting elevated classifications (e.g., R2, IEP, etc.)	UAA has a defined path to achieve classification that would best support its research trajectory.	Create a short-term faculty and staff committee to assess options and propose a solution	Aug. 24–May 25	Report of findings and recommendations
<b>E</b> Identify units or topic areas of excellence and/or greatest impact opportunity	Areas of excellence are defined and UAA has an investment plan to grow and succeed.	Develop and distribute internal opinion survey to faculty, staff and students	Aug. 23–Sep. 23	Survey distributed, number of respondents recorded, report created
		Host VCRs from similar institutions to assist VCR in evaluating and defining current and potential areas of excellence and opportunity	Sep. 23–Dec. 23	Site visit, findings report
		Create and implement an excellence and opportunity plan	Jan. 24–May 24	Plan created
		Implementation monitoring	Aug. 23–27	TBD

# GOAL 3

Ensure that students, faculty and staff involved in research, creative activity, public service and scholarly activity are trained, supported and equipped to be successful. **UAA 2027 Alignment** - Primary: Excellence through continuous improvement Secondary: Impact through innovation

Objectives	Outcome	Activity	Start to End	Annual Measurement & Reporting
<b>A</b> Create a coordinated and visible PI training that utilizes multiple modalities of dissemination	PI training is available, encouraged, desirable and meaningful	Develop a PI training resources webpage	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	Website completed
		Create a training plan including training update cycles and venues of dissemination	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	Training plan published
		Assess faculty and research staff needs and satisfaction with trainings	May 24–Aug. 27	1) Training specific survey results 2) Annual training satisfaction survey results
<b>B</b> Create, adopt, and implement tools for unit leadership to shape and manage their research, creative, and related scholarly activity portfolio	UAA leadership is prepared to empower and enable their faculty and staff to pursue research, creative and related scholarly activities for the benefit of UAA, their unit and the individual's career.	Workshop with Deans to define roles, responsibilities and training needs	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	Guidance document created and reviewed by faculty and staff
		Schedule, perform and evaluate training for deans, directors and approvers	Jan. 24–Aug. 27	1) Number of trainings 2) Annual training satisfaction survey results 3) Faculty support survey results
<b>C</b> Improve related administrative operations (e.g., SPAS, OSP, ORIC, OR, etc.)	Associated administrative operations are functional and systematically improving	Using the assessment from the spring 2023 NCURA Site Visit Report, create a program improvement plan for SPAS, OSP, compliance (i.e., IRB, IACUC, etc.) and OR	Aug. 23–Sep. 23	Implementation plan created
		Implement plan	Sep. 23–Aug. 27	Annual staff opinion survey results and customer satisfaction survey
<b>D</b> Create and coordinate a proposal improvement program and support focused on early career proposers, senior faculty new to proposing and faculty targeting next tier funding opportunities	UAA faculty and staff feel supported in pursuing funding that will achieve their career objectives in alignment with UAA's mission and vision.	Hire a second OSP pre-award manager with capacity and experience for large proposal development in coordination with the Research Operations Direction	Aug. 23–Dec. 23	Additional OSP personnel added
		Create and execute a proposal development workshop(s) (e.g., early career, mid-career, large project, new directions and unit specific)	Jan. 24–Aug. 27	Number of workshops provided
		Create and implement external funding proposal writing support and reviewing capacity to improve proposal products prior to submission	Aug. 23–27	Number of external funding proposals submitted or resubmitted with internal support
		Utilize contract support services on proposals of significant impact and opportunity as determined by Office of Research	Aug. 23–27	Number of proposals served by contract support services
<b>E</b> Create and coordinate advanced grant management and operations support to enable pursuit of large and complex external awards	UAA faculty and staff are supported and can effectively manage larger awards maintaining the ability to pursue additional funding and balance other workload requirements.	Creation and implementation of project management service team under Research Operations Manager	Aug. 23–27	1) Number of project managers on staff 2) Number of projects served by project managers
		Create and implement large proposal support request process and delineated support services	Aug. 23–27	Number of proposals served by support services

**Sample Monitoring and Reporting Sheet**

**GOAL:** Ensure that students, faculty and staff involved in research, creative activity, public service and scholarly activity are trained, supported and equipped to be successful.

**OBJECTIVE:** Create, adopt and implement tools for unit leadership to shape and manage their unit’s research, creative, public service and related scholarly activity portfolio.

**DESIRED OUTCOME:** UAA leadership is prepared to empower and enable their faculty, and staff to pursue research, creative, public service and related scholarly activities for the benefit of UAA, their unit and the individual’s career.

Action Item 1: Workshop with deans to define roles, responsibilities and training needs					
Lead	Start	End	Resources	Metric/Definition of Success	Status
VCR	8/23	12/23	<b>Personnel:</b> Provost and Deans <b>Time:</b> 4 hours workshop time, 2 hours outside of workshop	Guidance document created and reviewed by faculty and staff	Started
Description	In recent years, UAA processes have changed notably and deans from outside of UAA have been hired. Without explicit or required on-boarding or related training, those supervisors overseeing units or personnel learn by experience rather than preparation. This action is intended to identify what knowledge UAA leaders need to be critical yet encouraging as it pertains to research, creative, and scholarly activity.				

Action Item 2: Schedule, perform and evaluate training for deans, directors, and approvers					
Lead	Start	End	Resources	Metric/Definition of Success	Status
VCR	1/23	8/27	<b>Training Personnel:</b> OR staff, Research Enterprise staff/supervisors <b>Participating Personnel:</b> Provost, deans, center/institute directors, authorized supervisors (e.g., assistant or associate deans) <b>Time:</b> TBD	1. Number of trainings 2. Annual training satisfaction survey results 3. Faculty support survey results	Not started
Description	This activity will implement and evaluate the delineated guidance document produced in Action 1.				

**YOUR JOURNEY. YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR IMPACT.**



UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

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