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For immediate release

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High-res jpeg is available by request via email

**Nearly 1,100\* UAA graduates prepare to make their mark on the world**

Commencement at 1 p.m. Sunday in Alaska Airlines Center

The University of Alaska Anchorage celebrates the fall class of 2016 graduates at 1 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 18, in the Alaska Airlines Center. This ceremony honors the accomplishments of nearly 1,100\* undergraduate, graduate and professional school students, more than 400 of whom are walking in the ceremony.

“We are proud of our graduates,” said UAA Chancellor Tom Case. “On Sunday, they will join the ranks of more than 50,000 Seawolf alumni. We are pleased to celebrate this important milestone that is a testament to their hard work and dedication. We look forward to the positive mark they will make with their UAA education.”

Sophie Leshan speaks on behalf of graduating students. Leshan’s degree is in early childhood education, with magna cum laude and leadership honors. As a community-engaged student assistant, she worked with College of Education professors Kathryn Ohle and Hattie Harvey to investigate educator perceptions of Alaska’s statewide kindergarten-entry assessment. She later received an undergraduate research grant to conduct additional research related to the project. Leshan is a recipient of several awards, including the UAA Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Award. She has embraced leadership positions within the Emerging Leaders Program, USUAA Student Government, UAA Concert Board and the University General Assembly.

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At commencement, UAA recognizes Katherine Gottlieb of Anchorage with an honorary doctor of humane letters for her work to transform health care services for Alaska Native peoples. An honorary doctor of laws is awarded to John Rader of Anchorage for his role in forming Alaska’s new government as the then-territory transitioned to a state.

Longtime Anchorage resident Charlotte Fox receives UAA’s Meritorious Service Award for her support of artists and her work to advance the role of arts education at the university and throughout the community, state and region. Anchorage philanthropist and volunteer Jo Michalski also receives a Meritorious Service Award for her civic and entrepreneurial leadership, especially for women in business.

During commencement, retiring faculty also are receiving awards: Bjartmar Sveinbjornsson, professor emeritus of biological sciences, and Robert McCoy, professor emeritus of mathematics.

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

The University of Alaska Anchorage is Alaska’s largest university, educating more than 18,000 students annually and offering programs in more than 150 areas of study. UAA’s mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. Learn more at uaa.alaska.edu.

\*Please note the final number of graduates this semester is nearly 1,100 instead of more than 1,150 as stated in the original commencement press release sent on Dec. 13.

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