**For immediate release**

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**UAA’s fall commencement celebrates more than 1,100 graduates**

*Ceremony Dec. 17 at 1 p.m. in the Alaska Airlines Center*

The University of Alaska Anchorage will celebrate the graduates of the fall Class of 2017 at
1 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 17, in the Alaska Airlines Center. This ceremony honors the accomplishments of more than 1,100 undergraduate, graduate and professional school students from the Anchorage campus, more than 120 of whom will graduate with master’s or doctoral degrees.

“Each of our graduates has an amazing story to tell,” UAA Interim Chancellor Sam Gingerich said. “We are proud of their accomplishments, and we congratulate them as they join the ranks of their fellow Seawolf alumni. Together, they will have a profound impact locally, nationally and globally.”

Alexandria McLearen will speak on behalf of graduating students. Her bachelor’s degree is in natural sciences, along with two minors in Alaska Native studies and psychology. Her family and her Alaska Native culture inspired her to pursue her undergraduate studies. She is the first in her family to receive a college degree.

While at UAA, McLearen carved a path for herself, taking advantage of many opportunities both in academics and in student clubs. She represented students as the USUAA delegate for the College of Arts and Sciences, served as a Green Fee Board member, presented at the Undergraduate Research and Discovery Symposium and volunteered in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. She intends to apply to the Alaska WWAMI School of Medical Education to pursue a degree in medicine.

At commencement, UAA will recognize Gunnar Knapp, professor emeritus of economics, as the recipient of the Edith R. Bullock Prize for Excellence. The late Edith Bullock served the University of Alaska for 30 years as a member of the UA Board of Regents and the UA Foundation Board of Trustees. She established the award to recognize and reward individuals who have demonstrated excellence in support of the University of Alaska.

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Retired Superior Court Judge Roy Madsen of Kodiak will be awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters for his years of service in Alaska’s legal system, the Alaska Superior Court and on the UA Board of Regents. Madsen’s leadership was instrumental in establishing what is now Kodiak College, a UAA campus.

Diane Kaplan and Rick Goodfellow of Anchorage will each receive UAA’s Meritorious Service Award. The university is recognizing Kaplan for her work through the Rasmuson Foundation, benefiting individuals, organizations and communities throughout Alaska. Her longstanding support of the experimental economics program, ANSEP and the Honors College has had a profound impact on UAA.

Goodfellow will be recognized for enriching the lives of many people through his work as owner, founder and general manager of local radio station KLEF 89.1 FM. He has also served on advisory boards for UAA's College of Arts and Sciences and Department of Journalism and Communication, guiding the curriculum to better train graduates for Alaska’s industry needs.

Retiring faculty who have been honored with emeritus status will also be recognized at commencement.

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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE
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