UAA_1Line_2color_outline.jpg

For immediate release

Dec. 7, 2015

Media contact: Sarah Henning (907) 786-1435 w (907) 250-3352 c sarah.henning@uaa.alaska.edu

High-res jpegs are available by request via email

What’s new?

* Student speaker: Ruddy Sirri-Akonwi Abam, first-generation college student and daughter of political asylum-seeker graduates with criminal justice degree

**Nearly 1,200 UAA graduates prepare to make their mark on the world**

Commencement at 1 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13 in Alaska Airlines Center

The University of Alaska Anchorage celebrates fall class of 2015 graduates at   
1 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, in the Alaska Airlines Center. This ceremony honors the accomplishments of 1,192undergraduate, graduate and professional school students, about 380 of whom are walking in the ceremony.

Ruddy Sirri-Akonwi Abam, a first-generation college student, speaks on behalf of graduates. Abam grew up in Cameroon. She followed her father to Alaska after he sought political asylum in the United States. The criminal justice major worked her way through college doing everything from wrangling carts in the Carrs parking lot to assisting at a law firm. Her honors thesis proposes strategies for steering at-risk youth away from crime. After graduating, Abam plans to attend law school.

During commencement, retiring faculty and community members are receiving the following awards:

* **David P. Edgecombe**, Professor Emeritus of Theatre
* **John A. Olofsson**, Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering
* **David C. Wartinbee**, Professor Emeritus of Biology
* **Judge Karen Hunt**, Honorary Doctor of Laws – Hunt was the first woman appointed to Anchorage’s Superior Court, and she has taught UAA law classes.
* **Dennis McMillian**, Meritorious Service Award – As founding president and former CEO of The Foraker Group, McMillian has provided valuable resources to Alaska nonprofits and beneficial organizations, including UAA.

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

The University of Alaska Anchorage is Alaska’s largest university, educating more than 19,000 students annually and offering programs in more than 200 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.

# # #