

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

TEACHING EXCELLENCE in an ENGAGED UNIVERSITY



Community
partners ^{Reflection}
CITIZENSHIP ^{Service}
learning

Produced by

The Center for Community Engagement and Learning

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UAA as an engaged university

Universities across the United States and Canada are being challenged more than ever to be “Stewards of Place” — to contribute to their communities, partner with economic development initiatives, improve youth education, support the management of natural resources, and address social problems with an eye to the future.



In 2006 UAA was one of only 62 universities in the nation to receive the new classification from The Carnegie Foundation for curricular engagement, outreach and partnerships. Reclassified in 2010, UAA will apply again this year to renew our classification as “An Engaged University.” Our many and deep relationships with community organizations and state agencies in Alaska demonstrate our commitment to community partnerships.

UAA is proud of the growth in community partners and students involved in service-learning projects, and our visible commitment to improving student academic success through courses that offer students hands-on, engaged learning while helping with real needs in the community.

In this document UAA highlights just a few of our excellent service-learning courses. These stories demonstrate the investment by faculty to embrace and develop new teaching techniques that produces a long-term impact on student success and achievement as well as benefits in Anchorage and around the state.

We trust these stories will inspire even more faculty, students, and community partners to participate in this innovative and exciting approach to teaching and learning.

— Elisha “Bear” Baker
Provost and Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

Community-engaged teaching at UAA

One of the key ways that we engage with our communities at UAA is through our academic curriculum. UAA embraces the Carnegie Foundation definition of community engagement as “collaborations between institutions of higher education and individuals, organizations, and institutions in their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

Community-engaged teaching, often referred to as service learning, is where teaching, learning and scholarship combine to engage faculty, students, and community to address community-identified needs, deepen students' civic and academic learning, enhance community well-being, and enrich the scholarship of the institution. These engaged courses promote a deeper understanding of community problems, greater knowledge and acceptance of diverse races and cultures, and a greater ability to get along with people of different backgrounds as well as contributing to the public good.



Students who participate in community-engaged courses believe that they make a difference, and they commit to volunteering more in the future. Particularly important is that students who participate in community-engaged courses report that these classes increase their resolve to stay in college.

We are very pleased to feature a sample of the many fine faculty members who have implemented community-engaged teaching as one of the high impact practices for improving student success. These faculty and the practices in their classrooms exemplify the excellence in teaching that students and the community expect in our university. We hope you enjoy their stories.

— Judith Owens-Manley, Director



UAA Center for Community
Engagement and Learning
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Service learning produces long-term benefits

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Students learn more through hands-on, applied experience and feel good about the work they do to help the local community.

— Frank von Hippel,
Professor

After teaching water quality assessment as a lab exercise in Conservation Biology for years, Professor Frank von Hippel decided to move it into the field as a service learning project in spring 2001 in response to a request from the Russian Jack Community Council. The Council needed help studying the poor water quality in the reach of Chester Creek that runs through their neighborhood.

With that decision Conservation Biology became the first UAA science course converted into a service learning course. The conversion provided concrete evidence of the merits for student learning, community benefits and teaching rewards.

Engaged students are improved students

The course was offered each spring from 2001 through 2005, and again in 2009, 2012 and 2014. The first sign of success was an annual increase in enrollment. “Students get more out of the class because

they are engaged collecting the data and working on a real problem that the community is concerned about,” von Hippel explained. “*I’ve noticed that their technical skills are improved over what they were when we just taught water quality assessment in the lab. Taking it into the field has improved students’ ability to learn and retain the material and to be excited about it.*”

Several former students in the class were so inspired by the work that they chose to pursue graduate education and careers in water quality monitoring.

Providing real-world benefits

In 2001, Conservation Biology students began work on what has become a long-term study of water and habitat quality of Chester Creek within the reach of the Russian Jack Community. Bike trails run along the creek for many miles and are heavily used and enjoyed by the community. The data collected and analyzed by

Conservation Biology students focused on a specific section of the creek, and showed significant water and habitat quality impairment in urbanized sections. Results from a microbiology class also indicated potential health issues for people and animals using the creek due to elevated levels of fecal coliform from dog and geese feces.

This long-term monitoring by students provided valuable baseline information for understanding and evaluating current conditions, human health impacts, and restoration efforts. Just after the students completed their monitoring in 2009, the city restored the estuary at the mouth of Westchester Lagoon, the terminus of the creek. Using the six years of water quality monitoring data collected before this restoration, von Hippel and his students have had the opportunity to investigate how the lagoon restoration affected water and habitat quality of the Chester Creek watershed. The positive impact from this restoration project lays a strong foundation for developing additional restoration plans for other damaged sections of the creek, particularly the Russian Jack area that students have been studying from the beginning.

A UAA partnership as well as a community partnership

Professor von Hippel expanded the project in spring 2014 by collaborating with Professor Jamie Trammel and his students in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The Russian Jack Community Council and the Anchorage Waterways Council continue to



Professor von Hippel (right) consults with student at Chester Creek data collection site.



serve as community partners. Conservation Biology students will learn specific skills used by professionals to assess water chemistry and physical habitat variables for creek monitoring in the upstream portion of the middle fork of Chester Creek. Geography students will analyze relevant GIS datasets, including all the data collected by Conservation Biology students over the past 13 years. Students from both courses will work in teams to further develop a restoration plan for an impaired section of the creek to present to the Russian Jack Community Council. The executive director of the Anchorage Waterways Council, Cherie Northon, said, *"The timing for this project is very good. . . . Additional information is particularly important for leveraging change on the creek."*

From the lab to the field – data quality matters

When data are going to be used by the community for policy work or for publication, student data have to be of the highest quality, von Hippel explained. For this project, von Hippel also collects water chemistry and habitat data for comparison purposes and examines all student data for quality. If the data collected by students do not meet quality standards, they collect new data. Often



von Hippel or a graduate student works alongside students as they collect data and provide assistance if needed. Working closely with the students to corroborate the data provides valuable opportunities to encourage critical thinking in the moment by asking, *"Does this make sense?"*

Building relationships and support

In the beginning, a Center for Community Engagement and Learning grant made it possible to pay for supplies and a student helper, and mini-grants still assist with the costs of the water



monitoring kits. In addition to the partnership with the Russian Jack Community Council and the Anchorage Waterways Council, several government agencies are involved at various levels with improving the Chester Creek watershed, including the Municipality of Anchorage, the Alaska Department of Environment Conservation, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The long-term commitment to this project has made it possible for students to see the "before and after impacts" of the environmental restoration of Westchester Lagoon and to visualize long-term trends in environmental variables with data collected by their peers.

The project also deepened the relationship with the community partners while providing real-world benefits to the community, and giving faculty an opportunity to expand their teaching toolkit to enhance learning. Professor von Hippel teaches this course every other year; on the intervening years, Professor Doug Causey teaches with a range of his own community partners.

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Student field work at Chester Creek. Photos by Joshua Borough.

Engaged students = Transformational change

GEOGRAPHY

It is an amazing feeling when you realize your mentorship has led students to engage with key global issues and opened their eyes to the impact they can have in the world, even from Alaska!

— CESA Alyssa

Introducing a service learning component into Geography/International 101 transformed this general education course from a potentially depressing overview of the world's problems to one that engages students in possible solutions.

Infusing hope through service learning

Six years ago, Professor Dorn Van Dommelen incorporated service learning into course work for this class. "Geography 101 is a hard course to teach—It's a bit of a bummer. You go from region to region in the world talking about bad things: tropical deforestation in Latin America and neo-economic liberal policy destroying the economy, HIV/AIDS in Africa, genocide in Rwanda. By the end of the course, the professor is bummed

and students are bummed." So, he thought, why not rewrite the book on International Geography 101 and infuse it with a little hope?

Working with Heifer International

Van Dommelen looked around for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were working for change and found a partner in Heifer International which helps alleviate hunger and poverty around the world. "They were super welcoming and willing to invest in this," he says, referring to his curriculum plan to add hope alongside fact.

Using case studies

With support from Heifer's educational outreach team, Van Dommelen developed some real-world case studies on which

to base the course. The rewritten textbook is actually a website to which students purchase a subscription that gives them access to regional maps, photos and course content built around case studies.

"The idea is, since I'm not an expert on the whole world, to let those other parts of the world teach about it for us," he says.

Working backward from the curriculum checklist that lays out what the course must contain, Van Dommelen matched regions with concepts and illustrated those concepts with case studies showing NGO projects that are addressing problems. "In Africa, for example, Zimbabwe is HIV/AIDS, Tanzania is deforestation and desertification, Cameroon is gender equity, and Rwanda is genocide and travel politics," he says.





Professor Van Dommelen in Senegal (previous page) and with GEOG 101 CESAs (above). Photos courtesy Dorn Van Dommelen.

Building more partnerships

After six years of working with Heifer International and a limited number of other NGOs focusing on sustainable solutions to hunger and poverty, Van Dommelen has revised the curriculum for the course again to include a larger number of NGOs and additional issues and themes related to each region of study.

Community Engaged Student Assistants (CESAs)

A key element in the success of the service learning portion of the course is the involvement of Community Engaged Student Assistants (CESAs). These student assistants are recruited from among former students of GEOG/INTL 101. They participate in a conference before the beginning of the semester as well as meetings during the semester to discuss challenges and improvements.

They oversee and lead the smaller service learning groups within each class, leading team building and curricular activities in the classroom and facilitating in-class reflections.

Marilyn, a CESA shared, *"Being a CESA has broadened my horizons for career options. I am now*

considering working for a non-governmental organization."

Professor Van Dommelen said, *"The CESA program has developed into a de-facto leadership program. Several of these students have gone on to win Leadership Honors, Fulbright scholarships, and one worked as a White House intern."*

How the new course works

Students work in small groups on a case study selected from 15 international non-governmental organizations that address eight themes in various regions.

Case studies include the American Red Cross in Southeast Asia and

the Pacific on natural hazards and climate change, Water Aid America's work in North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, and Heifer International's work in Latin America on food and deforestation issues, among others.

Each group studies the organization and their work and prepares and implements a plan to teach others about the issues and efforts.

These presentations may be made to on-campus groups or community groups. CESAs help groups with logistics regarding the presentations, and to mediate and strengthen group dynamics.

Moving to an Engaged Department

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies (GES) faculty are working together to develop, deliver and assess innovative community-engaged projects that promote critical thinking and environmental stewardship throughout the curriculum and are committed to becoming an "engaged department."

Three GES faculty presented examples of their community-engaged teaching at a Campus Compact conference in April 2014.

I thought this class would be more about lands and current landmarks, rivers, mountains, formations, civilizations etc. But this class goes much more in-depth into the physical geography aspect of it. We have addressed problems I didn't even know existed and then facilitating a sort of in-class discussion about different methods to solve them is very helpful and useful.... I feel as though I'm not only obligated to be involved (in a good way) but that I want to get involved and make a difference.

— Student Reflection Statement

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Community projects develop real-world skills

ENGINEERING

T*his would have been outstanding work for a crack design consultant; to have it delivered by a team of students is truly impressive.*

— James Amundsen P.E.
Chief of Highway Design
(ADOT&PF) and a UAA
affiliated faculty member

Students enrolled in the Capstone course for Civil Engineering (CE A438) can expect a real-life experience and entrance into the simulated engineering firm, Seawolf Engineering. They are “all in” for a community project, working alongside engineering professionals throughout the semester planning for roadways, bridgework, or buildings. In this integrative capstone, students collaborate in multidisciplinary teams, meeting the client needs and applying the knowledge and skills learned in their undergraduate curriculum.

Helping the community while gaining valuable real-world experience

Professor Osama Abaza, who teaches the capstone course says, “*Simulating an engineering consulting firm in the capstone course has several advantages to the*

education process. Students become more aware of crucial issues not encountered in the undergraduate program and everyone gets involved in helping our community.

Abaza added that students also gain an edge over other entry level engineering candidates through the interaction with clients and consultants. Surveys of class members indicated a majority of the students either signed a contract or got a job commitment from an employer before they graduated, and nearly all are employed within six months of graduation.

How it works

Engineering faculty secure clients and projects in the community. About half of the lecture time in the course covers topics of concern to practicing engineers. In the other half, students hold “staff meetings” in which they discuss the project and its progress.

Students learn to function effectively on teams, to demonstrate the professional and legal responsibilities of practicing engineers, and to communicate effectively using engineering drawings and technical visualizations, construction specifications, written technical reports, and public oral presentations.

A sample project

The Seward Highway to 92nd Avenue Connector Project, with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) as the community partner, was completed in 2013.

James Amundsen P.E. Chief of Highway Design (ADOT&PF) and project leader said, “*The students did an outstanding job of identifying the real work constraints—utility conflicts, water level problems, drainage challenges, and right of way constraints—and then coming up with a workable alternative that they then developed plans, specifications and estimates to a 45-50% design review.*

The project included constructing a grade-separated interchange connecting two streets underneath the New Seward Highway and separated pathways for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Students also made major drainage improvements that included creating a wetland to accommodate increased water run-off. More information on the project can be found at www.uaa.alaska.edu/civilengineering/outreach/outreach.cfm.



S *seawolf Engineering* simulates an engineering consulting firm with the lead instructor of the capstone course serving as chief executive or president. Public agencies propose projects and provide a liaison to Seawolf Engineering, much as a project manager would work with an engineering firm. Each project has a student manager and a technical team of 2-3 students who are supervised and mentored by professional engineers as they complete the assigned projects. Photo courtesy Osama Abaza.

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Building culturally sustaining teaching methods

“**M**erging two rivers of knowledge” is Irasema Ortega’s description of how she and her colleagues in the College of Education and the Kashunamiut School District are building new science curriculum using traditional Cup’ik knowledge and language and Western science and technology.

The result of this confluence will produce a stronger, deeper educational system that could transform chronically underperforming schools in rural Alaska into models of success.

The Will of the Ancestors

While UAA’s partnership with the Kashunamiut School District started in 2009, Ortega began building on that partnership in 2012 soon after she arrived at UAA. She received the 2012 Selkregg Award for *The Will of the Ancestors, A Framework for Culturally Responsive Science*, the beginning of a multi-phase project with ambitious goals.

Reducing teacher turnover to improve academic success

Teacher turnover in rural Alaska is twice that in urban Alaska, often because many new teachers have little or no knowledge of the isolated villages. Research shows that Alaska-trained teacher turnover is lower than it is for teachers from outside Alaska.

Only five percent of all teachers in Alaska are Alaska Native, so the first goal was to prepare, support, and retain Alaska Native teachers as a way to improve academic success in rural Alaska.

Given current teacher turnover and the predictable lower student performance, Ortega and her colleagues began working with a cohort of 12 paraprofessionals from the Kashunamiut School District to support their pursuit of a Bachelor’s degree and K-6 teaching license. This “grow our own” strategy for developing teachers should have significant positive impacts.

Integrated curriculum

The second goal was to create a culturally responsive integrated science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics curriculum—the merging of the two rivers of knowledge. Ortega and her colleagues worked with local K-3 educators, elders and community members to build a curriculum that would then become an integral part of the required Elementary Science Methods course in UAA’s College of Education.

One of the lessons was built around the traditional fish trap. Students studied older models

built of wood and grass and a more modern version built of chicken wire. What was the engineering concept behind the designs? What was involved in adapting the traditional design to



Traditional (l) and modern (r) fish traps

more modern materials? Students also spoke with elders and collected stories about fishing. Science, engineering, art and writing were interwoven into the lesson.

Sharing their work

In November of 2013 Naqucin-Flora Ayuluk and Irasema Ortega shared their work during the keynote address at the

2013 Bilingual and Multicultural Excellence and Equity Conference, the largest gathering of educators in Alaska. Subsequently Dr. Ray Barnhardt, a leading science educator, referenced their work as an example of culturally sustaining curriculum, an endorsement recognizing the contribution and significance of the project.

An overarching goal of the project’s several phases is to build a curriculum and a teacher base of Cup’ik speakers that will sustain Chevak School’s Cup’ik language immersion program for K-3 classrooms.

The future

The cohort of teachers-in-training from Chevak will build upon their training and understanding of culturally responsive science and design. They will teach their own lessons under the supervision of the UAA College of Education and the Chevak teachers who wrote the initial science curriculum. Ultimately, the framework built and implemented at the Chevak

School is helping UAA professors learn how to promote culturally sustaining teaching practices throughout Alaska.



Irasema Ortega and Naqucin-Flora Ayuluk. Photos courtesy of Irasema Ortega



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Forensic accounting students help fraud victims



Losses due to fraud account for up to 5 percent of the typical organization's annual revenue, according to the 2012 Global Fraud Study presented by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.

Imagine you are the director of a small nonprofit organization in Anchorage and your bank balance seems off. Where did all those donations from your recent fundraising effort go? Is this something that has been going on a long time? When you call the police, you are told that you need to provide them with proof of the loss and how it happened. They want to see your audited books. You check with a local CPA and are shocked by the estimate for the work that the police require—up to \$30,000!

Helping fraud victims while gaining experience in forensic accounting

In 2011, UAA's College of Business and Public Policy's accounting department launched a pilot project to assist such victims of suspected fraud in Southcentral Alaska while offering students real world experience in forensic accounting.

The Justice for Fraud Victims Project (JFVP) was modeled after a program developed at Gonzaga University to give students an opportunity "to experience forensic accounting in a unique and exciting way while simultaneously providing a valuable service to the community," said Kevin Dow who started the pilot program.

Collaborating with local police and CPAs

Project collaborators include state, local, and federal law enforcement officials; local Certified Fraud Examiners (CFEs); and students and faculty of the College of Business and Public Policy. Soren Orley, associate professor of accounting, now serves as the project director.

The JFVP's goal is to help victims of suspected financial fraud in cases where forensic investigation services are limited or too costly. The police don't have the resources and the staffing to pursue all fraud

cases. "Victims need to come to us with their books already audited," according to Michele Logan, a detective with the Anchorage Police Department's Financial Crimes Unit and the liaison to the project.

Most small local businesses and medium to small not-for-profits do not have the resources to have a CFE or accounting firm perform a fraud examination, which can be billed out anywhere between \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Project increases number of cases investigated

JFVP students, assisted by professional Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) mentors and members of law enforcement, determine if and how the fraud was perpetrated and quantify any damages so the case can be prosecuted. The unique partnerships provide a distinctive experience for students, while benefiting the victims and the community by increasing the



Justice for Fraud Victims Project students. Photos by Joshua Borough.

It's amazing watching the light go on with these students, and watching the process as they mature is really fun! They do the interview with the client, they do the reports and present the information back to the client – it's as real world as you can get!

— Soren Orley

number of cases being investigated and ultimately prosecuted. Without the help and support of the JFVP program, many fraud victims might give up on the case or go out of business trying to pay for the required forensic examination.

Mentors, students and victims benefit

To be a part of JFVP, senior accounting students must go through an application process. They should have a serious interest in forensic accounting, be willing to meet the time commitment, and demonstrate a reasonable level of writing proficiency.

For the accounting students, a semester gives them four months of work experience they can put toward the two years required to be certified as a Fraud Examiner. In addition, the Certified Fraud Examiners that volunteer as

mentors earn 10 continuing education credits for the semester to count toward their requirements for professional education.

A resume boost

The hands-on experience working in their field gives accounting students a significant advantage when

applying for jobs after graduation.

“It [JFVP] gives students the opportunity to learn a heck of lot more than reading a book or a case,” explained UAA Provost Elisha Baker who was Dean of the College of Business and Public Policy when the program was launched.



I felt honored to be trusted to handle a case which involved real people and real business and to help resolve the situation. I learned a great deal about the procedures of a typical fraud investigation as well as took away a few tips to protect myself from fraud in my personal life. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who made this program possible.

— Justice for Fraud Victims Project student

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Patrick Berry (left) working with a project student.

The best [benefit] for me personally is working with and mentoring the students with the investigation process. I am proud to be a part of this program and excited about the future.

— Patrick Berry, VP Chief Audit Executive at Credit Union 1 and Mentor Coordinator

Learning by teaching – outreach in middle & high schools proves mutually beneficial

Several academic courses at UAA are engaged with middle and high schools in Anchorage and across the state. Four of these very important initiatives supporting youth development and positive outcomes in public education are featured here:

- **Political Science A324 Model United Nations** engages more than 300 high school students in a model United Nations process every year;
- **Theatre A498 Individual Research** involves theatre students working with high schools and middle school drama projects;
- **Biology A490 Selected Lecture Topics** brings high school students in to learn more about neurophysiology through campus visits to a cadaver lab and a Brain Bee competition each year; and
- **Communications A360 Competitive Debating** students participate as judges for high school and middle school debate competitions.



The 2013 Model United Nations. Photos by Erin Hooley.

Engaging students in international relations

Political Science A324 culminates in an exciting 3-day conference on the last weekend in February. More than 300 students from middle and high schools, and colleges in Alaska, the U.S. and sometimes Europe and Asia, come to UAA for a very realistic simulation of the United Nations.

The Secretariat

A core group of six to eight UAA students from the class serve as leads for the Secretariat and as directors of committees to carry out all the logistics for the conference. Other class members assist with training public school students, as well as training and support for teachers and professors across the state and beyond.

Getting ready

Preparation for participation in Model U.N. involves researching the United Nations, the assigned nation-state, the issue selected for the year, and the nation-state's position on the issue. Students also spend time practicing public speaking, caucusing, and negotiating skills, as well as writing and editing position papers.

Students arrive at the Model United Nations conference

committee meetings with their position papers ready. They work to pass resolutions like “A Resolution to Halt Human Trafficking,” sponsored by Brazil (UAA) at last year's conference and passed by the Model U.N. Security Council, or “Ending the Water Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa,” sponsored by Sudan (West High School) and passed by the Model U.N. Water Committee. The 2014 Model UN focused on the *Ethics of Emerging Technology*.

Model UN creates an environment that demonstrates the values of being articulate, critically thinking, and cooperative while under pressure and in the eye of your peers. These are skills that you can't teach someone in a traditional classroom setting.

— Rebecka Bowlus, Student Director of the Security Council

The partners

The multiple community partners for the Model UN include school districts, media outlets, and the Anchorage Consulate Corps. To support or participate in next year's Model U.N., contact the Department of Political Science or visit the Model U.N. website.



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Partnering to preserve high school drama programs

Professor Dan Anteau identified a need for additional and enhanced performing arts training after receiving numerous requests from the community. A reduction in funding for arts education within the Anchorage School District (ASD) had left only two high schools with a drama program, and only a few with after-school drama activities.

To help preserve arts and drama in the school district, Anteau created a partnership with ASD drama teachers in which UAA students could help provide more one-on-one interactions with their students and “raise the bar” on what could be provided for the entire class.

A pilot project

Beginning with a pilot project with two high schools and one middle school, Anteau paired UAA theatre students with ASD drama teachers and arranged for collaborative meetings for the larger partnership. The ASD faculty response has been very positive.

It allowed me to deepen and foster movement in rehearsals. It really showed in our performance and was such a positive experience. With so many kids in the class, it was hard to reach everyone. Every scene now gets done more easily.

—ASD faculty

Three UAA students in 2012-13 and four students in 2013-14 worked with their assigned schools, and two students were engaged in coordinating the project and organizing a fall and spring production on the UAA stage combining college and high school students. UAA students are work-



Students gathered for improv sessions.

ing this year with West, Bartlett and East High Schools and Mears Middle School, and have found it to be “an amazingly rewarding experience.” Another student explained why she loved working with the ASD students: “They have a little opening, and then they get so excited and run with it! It gives

me a better understanding, too!”

The first year had UAA students helping East High School students prepare for their production of Shakespeare Abridged. UAA students researched drama pieces for practice and improvisation in weekly sessions to help high school students improve their act-

ing technique. At West High, the UAA student worked with the drama teacher to develop curriculum and assist in team teaching while bringing additional support for a musical production at the school.

One of the most exciting aspects of this project is the sharing of knowledge that happens in our monthly collaboration meetings. The information and idea sharing is very inspiring to everyone involved. We are doing our part to preserve drama in the schools.

— Dan Anteau, Professor



Photos by Josuha Borough.

THEATRE

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Alaska Brain Bee: BIOL A490 takes science into the community

Service learning is a component in the Neuroanatomy and Neurophysiology Special Topics course (BIOL A490). In 2012 Professor Caroline Wilson integrated an exciting new element—The Alaska Brain Bee, part of the International Brain Bee program. In this academic competition, high school students learn brain facts and participate in a spelling bee-like event.

The students in BIOL A490 help coordinate the local competition, including outreach to local high schools to promote participation, designing and offering practice sessions with high school students, and providing logistical support before, during, and after the event itself. Students also prepared posters and led “brain development” activities held during the event.

Outreach included high school trips to the UAA WWAMI cadaver lab, a brain anatomy workshop led by UAA students, “the amazing brain” activities for young children at the UAA Creative Activities Fair run by the College of Education, and a poster session for Brain Awareness Week in the Consortium Library. This year they participated in Huffman

Elementary School’s “Science Night” with a Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) theme.

The 2014 Brain Bee, the third annual competition hosted and proctored by Professor Wilson and her class, was held for the first time at the Anchorage Museum. The local winner, Sarah Johns of Alaska Middle College School, competed in a national Brain

Bee competition in Baltimore on March 14-15.

UAA student Makala Bascome, shared her enthusiasm: *“This class has given me a new perspective about science outreach in the community and the need for it. My friends and I are actually starting a science and math outreach club next semester to involve more kids in the community in science.”*

The Brain Bee and its outreach has greatly benefited from the CCEL’s Community Engaged Student Assistant (CESA) program. For the third year in a row UAA student Sean Costello helped promote, organize, and develop the events associated with the BIOL 490 course. Sean’s work as a CESA culminated in his presentation at the 2013 Society for Neuroscience Meeting in San Diego, CA (travel supported by the UAA Honor’s College).

“Science is learned throughout life and some of the best lessons come not from text books but from the exchange of ideas, techniques and knowledge with your peers and colleagues at conferences such as the one I was fortunate enough to attend,” Sean said.



I’m excited to get students thinking about something other than how basic science facts work . . . By getting them into the community, these students are helping to educate about science and science education.

— Caroline Wilson, Professor

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Sarah Johns (center front) of Alaska Middle School College won the 2014 Alaska Brain Bee by a margin of two points over Bailey Fuller of Service High School. Third place was awarded for the second year in a row to Cooper Danner of Colony High School. Photos by Joshua Borough.

Seawolf Debate team mentors students in grades 7-12

Steve Johnson's Competitive Debating course (COMM 360) offers debaters academic credit while doing community-engaged work with high schools and middle school students.

The Seawolf Debate Program's (SDP) fall calendar includes opportunities for members to serve as judges at high school and middle school debating tournaments, in Anchorage, Homer, Wasilla, or Palmer.

In the spring semester, members of the SDP and COMM 360 students host the Alaska School Activities Association's State High School Drama, Debate & Forensic Championships. UAA students manage all of the logistics for the tournament in which 22-28 high schools from around Alaska participate, with the Anchorage School District supplying the space and equipment.

The debaters also host the Alaska Middle School Public Debating Program Championships. This initiative started three years ago with three partner schools and



Middle School Debate. Photos by Dana Ovsak.

has grown to include nearly every middle school in the ASD and a few from out-of-town.

Professor Johnson believes that including the community-engaged activities makes all the difference for his students. *"They see the tangible return on their efforts,"* he explains. *"They engage*

with the students on complex issues, and it is a very intensive experience for them."

Johnson sees the training in critical thinking and advocacy skills for young people as the benefits to the community. He thinks that UAA benefits as well from the exposure of high school debating

students to UAA and the social relationships that develop with UAA students – it's a great way to recruit future students!

COMMUNICATIONS

They see the tangible return on their efforts. They engage with the students on complex issues, and it is a very intensive experience for them."

— Steve Johnson, Professor

STEVE JOHNSON

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The Center for Community Engagement and Learning (CCEL) has been recognized by the *President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll* in 2011, 2012, and 2013 for UAA's commitment to and achievement in community service. CCEL maintains memberships for UAA faculty in the following organizations, which are focused on community engagement:



- **Campus Compact** is a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students' citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty to integrate community-based learning into the curriculum (www.compact.org)



- **Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life** is a consortium of more than 100 colleges and universities committed to engaging people in the arts, humanities and design in the work of democratizing civic culture. Imagining America holds an annual conference each year and has a website that includes research & action, publications, and convenings (www.imaginingamerica.org).

Meaningful reflection fuels deeper learning



This face-to-face work helps students understand that anyone can be hungry, but such things as race and ethnicity, gender, and family structures can contribute to who is more likely to be hungry.

—Tracey Burke,
Associate Professor

Finding the right community partner and incorporating the DEAL (*Describe, Examine, and Articulated Learning*) model of reflection made all the difference in students' engagement and learning in Tracey Burke's Social Work A243, Cultural Diversity and Community Service Learning course.

This course is the required "diversity" course for social work majors and minors and attracts students from a variety of disciplines. Burke began teaching it in the spring of 2004, her second semester at UAA.

The course lays the foundation for how students think about the impact of diversity on social and economic justice issues. Students in the course should gain an understanding of how race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, or disability intersect

to influence how individuals think of themselves and others and ultimately how this impacts the work of social institutions.

In spring 2004, the course was one of the only courses on campus that included a mandatory service learning component. While Burke embraced the benefits of the concept, she felt she needed to learn more about how to integrate it into her teaching.

That learning didn't happen overnight. It took her several years to develop the service learning activities that now provide the heart of the class. She shares her experiences for other faculty in a *Making Learning Visible* portfolio available on UAA's website.

Finding the right partner

After two semesters working with a local agency serving the homeless, Burke realized the students

were not satisfied or productively engaged. When a friend of a friend who worked at the Food Bank of Alaska told Burke the Food Bank needed volunteers to collect data for a hunger survey, Burke's class jumped at the chance to work with them. A new partnership formed that has proven to be very successful. The course is now organized around hunger, which enables students to see patterns in diversity as a mechanism for social inequality.

Students work in food pantries and kitchens and provide outreach to families who may qualify for food stamps. This face-to-face work helps students understand that anyone can be hungry, but that such things as race and ethnicity, gender and family structures can contribute to who is more likely to be hungry.



Tracey Burke (center) with students Carmela Ramirez (left) and Krista Howard (right). Photo by Joshua Borough.



Students serving at the Food Bank of Alaska. Photo courtesy of Food Bank of Alaska.

Creating a system for meaningful reflection

Once she had refined the community-based activities of the service learning course work, Burke was still not satisfied with the quality of the students' learning. She had structured the course so that the service learning accounted for 50 percent of the grade, and students wrote a 2-3 page paper after each session of service. In order to receive an "A" on a paper, the student had to include a reference to at least one assigned reading, in addition to describing the service performed. "Not surprisingly, students provided lots of description and relatively little analysis," Burke said. Though with feedback along the way, the papers did improve over time.

Working with the DEAL Model

In fall 2010, Burke began using the DEAL model of reflection and has been using it consistently since. The DEAL model of reflection, created and refined by Patti Clayton and Sarah Ash, includes three phases: 1) Description of service performed;

2) Examination of elements of the service guided by the instructor's prompts; and, 3) a statement of Articulated Learning linking the service to specific learning domains (personal/professional, academic, and civic).

Student feedback has reflected a positive change since she started using DEAL.

"For the first time, students commented not only that they found the number of required hours to be a problem, which they've always said, but that they learned a lot, and it was worth it—and not to reduce the hours."

Burke first learned about the model at a conference and has read the many articles published about it in the service-learning literature.

"Although I think my instincts were taking me in a good direction, it was really important to see what others were doing. It would have taken me many more years of experimenting to come up with something this effective by myself," she explained.

Using personal blogs

Burke's students use personal blogs within Blackboard to describe their service and log their hours.

Four times during the semester, the class examines their experiences in small group sessions. First they focus on a personal theme, something the students learn about themselves.

The second and fourth times, they focus on academic themes, where students make explicit connections to readings and class discussions and lectures.

The third time, they focus on a civic theme, exploring something beyond the individual and the class to the "bigger" world outside.

After each group session, students post an additional blog entry summarizing the highlights of their discussions as they pertain to individual experiences and lessons.

Each session leads to an Articulated Learning paper on the theme of that session. These four formal papers get individual grades that currently are equal to the overall service learning participation grade. The topic of the paper is not the service itself but what they learned through the service.

Elevating student engagement and learning

This multi-faceted reflection structured with instructor prompts and feedback, alone and in groups, has elevated both the level of student engagement and learning.

Students no longer simply log hours to fulfill a requirement but are gaining a deeper appreciation for the social issues related to diversity as well as developing a more focused approach to analyzing those issues and the impact on people's lives.

I never thought I judged people based on their outside appearance. It wasn't until this assignment that it really became apparent to me how preprogrammed these judgments are in me.

— Student reflection

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Integrated curriculum enhances capstone quality

COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

After seven years of incremental restructuring, project quality has improved. Instead of having to beg sponsors to participate, the program now has to screen requests.

— Dennis Drinka,
Professor

What if you could improve student motivation, engagement and success plus provide a superior service for community partners? A new project-centric approach to the curriculum of the Management Information Systems (MIS) program in the College of Business and Public Policy has done just that, but it did not happen overnight.

The original curriculum included a required senior project course, Systems Design and Development (CIS 489), offered in the spring semester of the student's senior year. The one-semester course was unsatisfying on many levels. The projects were supposed to pull together everything the students had learned to that point but one semester simply did not allow enough time for student teams to thoroughly initiate, analyze, design, construct, implement and present a project that really worked.

"Project success was based almost exclusively on team heroics," explained Dennis Drinka, associate professor and Minnie Yen, professor and department chair in an article profiling how they redesigned the curriculum. (Journal of Information Systems Education, Vol. 19(3)). Project results were uneven. Sponsors had very low expectations—they often considered their involvement as a service to the program rather than a benefit, according to the instructors.

Now, after seven years of incremental restructuring, project quality has improved. Instead of having to beg sponsors to participate, the program now has to screen requests.

The right process

Instructors saw the problem with the senior capstone course and knew they needed to revise the project development process. They adapted the Capability Maturity

Model (CMM), developed by the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie-Mellon University for improving information system software development, to guide them in making the changes. As they began working with this five-stage framework, it became clear that it offered a process that could help improve not only the design course but the entire curriculum.

While one of the problems with the original capstone course was lack of time, another underlying issue was the lack of course integration in the MIS program. Each course was designed, developed and taught independently, and students were not "connecting all the dots" with a broader understanding of how the courses worked together to prepare them for employment.

The first step

The first step in integrating the curriculum was to link the required project management course (CIS 410) offered in the fall of the senior year. This course was initially concepts-based using problems and small case studies to reinforce the concepts. Now students apply the concepts to develop the plan for their community-based capstone projects as part of this class. The projects and plans are then evaluated by the project management instructors using a set of predefined quality criteria, and only those projects that pass the evaluation are allowed to move forward to the senior project course.

The additional time to develop a project combined with the rigorous evaluation process helped raise the overall quality of the community-based projects. Sponsoring organizations began to



Kathleen Voge (left), instructor for CIS 310, and Minnie Yen (right), professor and department chair, at a student project review session. Photos by Michael Dinneen.

change their view of participation from a service they provided to a service they received.

Extending the success

Once instructors saw the success of integrating the project management course, they included the Systems Analysis course (CIS 310) in the senior project course sequence. This linkage provided upfront time for detailed analysis and feasibility studies for projects—the first stage of the senior project. This course is held in the spring semester of the student's junior year, and students develop plans and analysis throughout the semester. These are reviewed by instructors and project sponsors, and final grades are contingent on proof of the sponsor's acceptance.

With this integration, the projects moved from a one semester “dash” to a three semester sequence that provides a much more realistic timetable for producing higher quality results with real-world benefits.

The new curriculum began for students who declared their major in the 2005-06 academic year. In addition to the linked courses,



Students take their learning more seriously than before the redesign and are more motivated to apply what they have learned.

— Professors Drinka and Yen

the program realigned sequences and pre-and co-requisites to make sure students have broad and solid knowledge when they reach the

final project course. The integration has helped students become more fully engaged in their course work as well as their projects from

the moment they declare their major.

“They take their learning more seriously than before the redesign and are more motivated to apply what they have learned,” wrote professors Drinka and Yen. The quality and consistency of the students’ learning has also improved. These results are reflected in feedback from the community organizations, employers and instructors.



Student team members with Professor Minnie Yen.

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Connecting the Kenai campus & community

KENAI
PENINSULA
COLLEGE

The mission is to express and to question—to communicate effectively—and to promote discussion.

— Celia Anderson
Associate Professor, Art,
Kenai Peninsula College

Interdisciplinary service-learning is a win-win for all involved.

— Cheryl Siemers
Associate Professor, English,
Kenai Peninsula College

The partnership between the Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) and the Kenai Peninsula Visitors and Cultural Center (KVCC) isn't just about a single project or a single course. Students from classes in Art, English, Science and Communications all participated in at least one of three projects produced by this award-winning collaboration.

"Outstanding" program

This service learning partnership creates formal exhibits using art and writing to explore community concerns and history. It earned a Diana Hacker Two-Year College English Association Award for Outstanding Program in English for Two-Year Colleges and Teachers in the category of "Reaching Across Borders."

A win-win for all

The Kenai Visitors and Cultural Center is a city museum and visitors center with a small staff that relies on the support and volunteerism of the community to provide new exhibits and community

events. Without collaborations such as this, the KVCC would not have the research capacity to develop exhibits and community awareness on important issues.

"Interdisciplinary service-learning is a win-win for all involved," said Cheryl Siemers, the KPC writing and communications instructor who helped develop the partnership and submitted the KPC program for Hacker award consideration. "I think the award recognizes the potential of engaged learning for everyone."

Celia Anderson, KRC associate professor of art who recently

retired said, "*The primary mission of fine art is really not that different from the mission of English classes. The mission is to express and to question—to communicate effectively—and to promote discussion.*"

Harvesting the History of Work

The most recent project, "Harvesting the History of Work," brought together art, English and communication students and faculty to produce an exhibit and hold public forums exploring the history of work on the Kenai Peninsula. In-class and community events were held leading up to the opening of the formal exhibit in March 2012.

Art students in Surface Design, Watercolor, and Painting researched the topic and explored design possibilities before creating artwork for the exhibit that expressed their personal views.

English students in PRPE A107 and ENGL A212 and A111 produced written text that accompa-



Celia Anderson

BRANDI KERLEY



Breadcrumbs, Discharged and Dyed Fiber Construction

The opening events were breathtaking as I saw the work and interpretation other students presented hang side by side. Each piece forming a component of a larger whole. Interacting with other community members and hearing their take on our work and their history brought additional layers of meaning and substance to our projects and tied us together: past, present and future.

— Brandi Kerley, participant
in all projects

I enjoyed taking part in the History of Work project. It gave me the chance to reflect on my childhood and the kind of work I'd grown up around as well as giving me a chance to pay tribute to my father's business. Being a part of the project also opened my eyes to other jobs on the Peninsula. It was definitely an eye-opening experience.

— Nicole Lopez, participant in the Heritage Portrait & History of Work projects

NICOLE LOPEZ



They That Build It, Acrylic on Canvas

© Harvesting the History of Work

nied the artwork and explained many of the critical issues in the discussion. Students in COMM A111 conducted interviews and generated multi-media educational pieces to share the story of workers in the community.

The Heritage Portrait Project

The first project involved six courses and produced the exhibit, "The Heritage Portrait Project" as part of the 50th anniversary of Alaska Statehood celebration in 2009.

More than 100 KPC students participated in the project that focused on homesteaders on the Kenai Peninsula. Students in writing courses taught by Cheryl

Siemers interviewed homesteaders about their experiences and conducted research for stories they produced for the exhibit.

Art students in courses taught by Celia Anderson and Jayne Jones created works that captured these rich histories. The materials then became part of a peninsula-wide effort to collect and archive local histories for an exhibit at the KVCC.

Exploring Perspectives: The Art and Science of Climate Change

Eleven courses, including art, writing, science and communications produced the second project, "Exploring Perspectives: The Art and Science of Climate Change."

Students researched and interpreted data through written reflections, poetry, research papers, multi-media presentations and visual art. In addition to Cheryl Siemers and Celia Anderson, this

project included Paula Martin, assistant director of Academic Affairs and instructor for the Science, Technology and Culture class.

Martin said at the opening of the exhibit in January 2010, "This is important to students as it allows them to take their academic work and education out into the world."

Community discussions were held at the Kenai River Campus and at the KVCC leading up to the exhibit. "Students and community members have a variety of opinions on climate change," said Siemers. "We weren't trying to push a view but rather engage dialogue."

Cross-disciplinary reflections

Each student participating in these projects included written and verbal structured reflection on their service experiences. The community forums introduced students to diverse voices on the topics. After the forums students participated in an organized discussion of their reactions. Cross-disciplinary sessions provided students an opportunity to reflect on one another's work in art, written text, and verbal discussion. In addition, the KVCC

exhibit curator Laura Forbes spoke with classes via *Elive*, checking on the progress of the project, and providing a chance for students to reflect on the challenges in completing the project.

"Overall, the projects have had a broad impact, resulting in community-wide dialogues in forums, special programs, and presentations," wrote Janice Maloney High, associate professor of English at Kenai Peninsula College.

Some of the material in this article was excerpted from an article by Janice Maloney High published in the February 2012 KPC Connection, and from an article by Beth Hack, Kenai River Campus media student in the February 2010 KPC Connection.

Art Images courtesy of Brandi Kerley and Nicole Lopez from Harvesting the History of Work catalog.
Other images courtesy of Cheryl Siemers.



Cheryl Siemers

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Courses focus on community engagement

More courses at UAA now incorporate some level of service learning in the curriculum from 100 level to senior capstone courses. This report highlights several of the outstanding opportunities for what can be life-changing hands-on experiences in the community. In addition, UAA offers two courses in very different parts of the university that focus specifically on community engagement: an introductory course for students interested in earning a Certificate in Civic Engagement, and a key component for upper division students in the Honors College.

Community Service: Theory & Practice (Honors 310)

Connecting community and self to develop deeper social intelligence

Community Service: Theory and Practice (HNRS 310) explores questions of service, community and self and is required for Honors College students. The class not only emphasizes community service, it provides a deep understanding of how the social service sector works.

The seminar format combines selected readings and guided volunteer service in a nonprofit cultural organization or government agency of the student's choice. Each student is required to complete eight hours of peer mentoring and serve as the facilitator of at least one class session, building the sense of a learning community for the class. Honors graduates often go on to volunteer or work in the social sector, and this course provides critical insight into their life after college.

An important part of Honors College students' upper division experience, this course focuses intensively on community engagement and exemplifies our commitment to high impact practices with service learning and undergraduate research.

— Ronald Spatz, Dean of the Honors College

A personal connection

Students often select organizations based on a personal experience. One such student had a family member who had suffered a traumatic brain injury. The student joined with another to work at the Alaska Brain Injury Network, an organization focused on helping survivors and their families.

During the semester the students developed and implemented a public awareness program on brain injury, culminating with a special session for students at UAA. According to Network staff, no volunteers had ever become such effective advocates.

Another student worked at the Clitheroe Center, Salvation Army's substance abuse treatment program. Through the experience, he found clarity for his future career and decided to pursue graduate work in psychology.

Dennis McMillian, who has taught HNRS 310 for several years as an adjunct instructor said, "Many Honors students will go on to pursue advanced degrees, and this class helps them develop their EQ (social intelligence), not just their IQ." He's dedicated to teaching this class even though he has a full time job and travels about 200 days each year.



Honors students discuss undergraduate research in the community projects at the Undergraduate Research and Discovery Symposium. Photo courtesy of UAA Honors College.

When I started teaching this class, I quickly became addicted to the energy I get from spending time with some of the brightest people around. I have always been an optimist. Working with Honors students reinforces that hope for the future.

— Dennis McMillian
Instructor

Positive & effective

Students appreciate the opportunity that this class represents. One student admitted that she was apprehensive about enrolling and overwhelmed when she first read the syllabus. "However," she shared, "The class was a positive experience because it made us do something about the world we live in." And another student explained, "The course was effective in getting students involved outside of campus . . . The bonus was creating space for dialogue between Honors students!"

DENNIS McMILLIAN

Adjunct Professor,
UAA Honors College
Executive Director, Foraker, Inc.

Author,

*"Focus on Sustainability:
A Non-Profit's Journey"*

Building a foundation for strong and lasting community connections

Introduction to Civic Engagement (CEL 292) is the foundation course for students earning the Certificate in Civic Engagement and also fulfills a social science general education requirement (GER). The seminar-style class introduces students to community engagement principles, issues of poverty and sustainability, ethics, and the local community through intensive readings, community-engaged activities, and reflections.

Cross-discipline interest

The course attracts students from a wide range of disciplines: Early Childhood Education, Environment and Society, Business,



Vitor de Carli, graduate student at UAA and Engage Social Issues Liaison, with the Refugee and Immigration Services Program (RAIS), Catholic Social Services.

As I have taken a few sociology classes and read books on environmental justice, the problems that arise with a low-income life are not unfamiliar to me. However, it is completely different to read about than it is to actually see it. The 20 hours I spent at the Boys and Girls Club provided me with legitimate connections to the world I had only previously heard about as statistics. — TF, Fall 2013

Engineering, English, and Biology. Students share their perceptions of civic engagement, and patterns begin to surface: citizens working together; sharing knowledge, skills, and responsibility for action; and respect for diverse ideas.

Students complete a “Civic Autobiography,” a group research

project on a community issue, become cognizant of current events, take up an issue that they care about, and acquire expertise so they are able to communicate about the issue.

Students this year became involved with:

- **Homeward Bound**, a program based in Mountain View that provides transitional housing and community services to homeless individuals dealing with chronic alcoholism who are trying to stabilize their lives. Student volunteers build relationships by making tied-dyed T-shirts with residents, baking, and playing games.
- **Boys & Girls Club**, an after-school program, leading recreational activities or providing homework help, and
- **Refugee and Immigration Assistance (RAIS)** program where they served as teacher assistants in Orientation classes or English as a Second Language classes and more.



Jenny Di Grappa served at Karluk Manor in her Introduction to Civic Engagement.

Introducing students to the world of civic engagement is transformational for me and the students. During the semester students explore the skills of critical thinking and community action. For many college students, this class is their first exposure to “community” through reading a daily newspaper, attending community council meetings, and engaging with the community in a service learning project. I have the great joy of watching students spread their wings and realize their potential as citizens.

— Angela Liston, Adjunct Professor

ANGELA LISTON

UAA Adjunct Professor

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Developing designs for projects across Alaska

ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTING

I really enjoy this, because it's not out of the book. It can drive students crazy because there is no single right answer. There is variability, it's open-ended, all of this is intriguing to me.

— Brian Bennett,
Associate Professor

For the past nine years community representatives have asked students in AET A121 Architectural Drafting to prepare concepts and documentation for a variety of projects. The course is taught two out of every three semesters, and community members come to Professor Brian Bennett with ideas and requests.

"The word has gotten out," he says. "I've got projects already lined up that we weren't able to fulfill."

Projects for the course have included:

- a museum display and activity space for the Alaska Veterans Association;
- an emergency and community shelter for the community of Gambell on Saint Lawrence Island;
- a community and education center for the Anchorage Hmong community;
- a new sanctuary and educational facility for the Jewel Lake Parish Presbyterians;

- a new meeting room and outdoor pavilion for the Mountain View Lions Club;
- a center for social services, art, and community gatherings for the Mountain View Development Association;
- and most recently, an expansion of an aircraft hangar in Chignik Lagoon, to include a community center that will also serve as an emergency shelter.

Architectural Drafting introduces technical skills needed by drafters and technicians to work with architects, and student work is accomplished using a variety of software. The comprehensive design "final problem" of the client is introduced early in the course, and the intent of the class is to provide experience similar to professional work.

For each community project, students complete individual concept drawings. Students are advised that professional bid

contracts have time and date limitations that are not negotiable.

The students hold an open three and one-half hour forum and present their completed ideas to the 'clients' and other interested members of the local community. That community audience might include a mayor or other city/town officials, *Anchorage Daily News* representatives, local architects and contractors, faculty, and administrators. Each client receives printed copies of the presentation for additional viewing and comment by their own constituents.

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I love to create things. I like to have a finished product that I can be proud of. By doing this project ... I learned that many different factors influence the design of a building, so many that it requires a large team, a lot of time, and thorough communication between all parties involved. I enjoy all aspects of designing a project and now believe this is the right field for me.

— Megan Endreson, student

Leadership in community engagement

Two programs with the Center for Engagement and Learning offer students paths to leadership in community engagement at UAA while also providing faculty valuable support in their service-learning courses.

Community-Engaged Student Assistants (CESAs)

The CESA continually amazes me with his ability to work with the community partners...he has been an invaluable assistant in this goal.

— Professor

CESAs earn tuition awards specifically to assist faculty in community engaged projects, community partnership development, and to support the students' leadership in community engagement. Their activities emphasize the importance of integrating community engaged experiences, disciplinary learning outcomes, and/or research and creative activity goals.

CESAs meet twice each semester to connect as a group and communicate about their projects, share ideas, and get support for their leadership and advocacy skills. CCEL supports faculty and students in these projects by providing technical assistance for faculty and project support and opportunities for student reflection.

Through my work with the Alaska BrainBee, I have gained skills in organizing events, designing a large project, and public speaking, all while learning the importance and practicality of community outreach and engagement. Additionally, I have been provided a mentor who has continually encouraged my academic growth beyond levels I could have imagined. These are the true rewards of working as a CESA. — Sean Costello



UAA had its largest group of CESAs ever in 2013-14 with 50 students participating, up 79 percent from 2011-12.

ENGAGE Social Issues Student Liaisons

It changed my life profoundly, because it's stuff that I never thought of – as far as professional development, it pushes us to excel in a different type of excellence, beyond our comfort zone.

— Student Liaison

ENGAGE Liaisons become leaders in community engagement and “issue experts” on the complex social issues that face our neighborhoods and communities, especially in urban Alaska, the City of Anchorage.

The ENGAGE Liaison position offers student leaders a way to create a lasting impact in the community, building connections with community agencies, faculty and other students.

ENGAGE Liaisons may work with CCEL for several semesters or even several years during their academic career, engaging with Anchorage neighborhoods and community-campus partnerships through such events as ENGAGE Week, Think Tanks, and the Urban in Alaska conference.

What we do here as an ENGAGE Liaison contributes to the community—the focus and effort is at such a deep and profound level. It's like building a forest—building that sense of community within the university and from the university to community. — Student Liaison



ENGAGE Social Issue Liaisons provide connections each semester for service learning courses to community sites and community-engaged projects.

Reflection **Students** teaching **Engaged**
COMMUNITY Partnerships **Faculty** citizenship
Service learning Hands-on



UAA Center for Community
Engagement and Learning
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE