New and noteworthy

The National Institutes of Health awarded UAF $3.8 million to finish space in the $19 million Biological Research and Diagnostics facility, a 42,000-square-foot animal care facility that will expand UAF’s biomedical and behavioral science programs, including infectious disease and environmental health and toxicology. The award represents more than 10 percent of the total NIH construction grants awarded in 2005. Work done in BiRD will complement that conducted in the adjoining state virology lab, to begin construction in summer 2006, where UAF will also have research space.

The Alaska State Legislature appropriated $10 million in general funds to complete the Ocean Sciences Facility at Lena Point, providing UAF a total of $21.5 million to construct a fisheries and marine biology teaching and research facility in Juneau.

The new Office of Advancement and Community Engagement focuses on outreach, community engagement and coordinating development efforts.

The College of Rural Alaska changed its name to the College of Rural and Community Development to better reflect its community-driven educational efforts across the state.

The engineering programs in the College of Science, Engineering and Mathematics, the School of Mineral Engineering and the Institute of Northern Engineering are now combined to form the College of Engineering and Mines. The remaining programs reorganized into the College of Natural Science and Mathematics.

Awards and accolades

The School of Education received national accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, the highest level available for teacher preparation programs. UAF provides a broad range of undergraduate, licensure and master’s degree programs for educators at all levels of their profession. The accreditation applies to programs in Fairbanks and the communities served by UAF’s Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay, Interior-Aleutians, Northwest and Chukchi campuses.

Syndonia Bret-Harte, Institute of Arctic Biology research assistant professor; Terry Chapin, IAB professor of ecology; and colleagues at IAB’s Toolik Field Station published in Nature their finding that changes in the composition of arctic tundra plant species due to climate warming could lead to much greater release of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, accelerating global warming.

Professor Glenn Juday, President’s Professor John Walsh and professors emeriti David Klein and Gunter Weller were among the lead authors of the 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report, produced by the International Arctic Research Center for the National Science Foundation.

The 2005 steel bridge team (pictured above) finished first in the northwestern regional competition and later placed sixth among 43 teams in the national competition, the fifth time since 1993 that UAF finished in the top six nationally.

Four of UAF’s athletics teams advanced to the post-season, with three going on to the NCAA Championships. Six student-athletes were named All-Americans. The hockey team won the Alaska Airlines Governor’s Cup for the fifth straight year.

The Army ROTC program was recognized as the Best Small School Program in its brigade in 2004, while five senior cadets were selected as distinguished military graduates for the 2005–2006 academic year, an
An aerial view of the UAF campus shows the roundabout linking Thompson Drive, Tanana Loop and West Tanana (Farm Road).

An aerial view of the UAF campus shows the roundabout linking Thompson Drive, Tanana Loop and West Tanana (Farm Road).

Milestones
The Cooperative Extension Service celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2005.

Thompson Drive opened as the new main entrance to the Fairbanks campus. A cooperative effort with the Alaska Department of Transportation, the road serves as a demonstration project for a new approach to building roads on permafrost. The design was developed by Doug Goering of the College of Engineering and Mines.

The UA Museum of the North celebrated its expansion with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September.

Graduate enrollment was the highest ever in 2004-2005, with 1,052 master’s degree candidates and 250 doctoral candidates. There were 236 master’s degrees awarded in May 2005, also the highest ever for UAF.

Alaska is a magnificent place, deserving of an equally magnificent university. There is no other university like UAF. We are America’s arctic university, and as a Land, Sea and Space Grant institution, we have an astonishing range of responsibilities to educate our students, develop the state’s workforce, reach out to Alaskans through our community campuses and conduct important and relevant research. We have incredible breadth, depth and diversity, and we are committed to being even better than we are—to being the university Alaska must have as it prepares for its second 50 years of statehood.

I have identified six pathways to success on which the university must focus to retain our stature as Alaska’s preeminent teaching and research university: ensuring student success; exemplifying quality in everything we do; increasing enrollment, particularly in upper-division and graduate programs; expanding innovative research; accelerating philanthropic giving; and fostering statewide economic development.

Within this year’s Ad Summum report, you will find stories of individuals and programs that highlight each of these pathways to success. As these stories demonstrate, the work we do comes from the creativity and enthusiasm of the people who make us great.

UAF’s Six Pathways to Success

Student success
Emphasis on quality
Enrollment
Research
Philanthropy
Economic development
Ann Wilson

Ann Wilson grew up all over Alaska, so spending the last four years in one place, on UAF’s Fairbanks campus, has been something of a novelty. But don’t confuse staying in one place with inertia. This undergraduate didn’t slow down at all as she participated in summer research programs and served as an officer in a student club.

“For me it was the connection to research opportunities.”

“I was interested in science, and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society was one of the student science clubs,” Wilson explains. UAF’s AISES won its fourth Distinguished Chapter Award from the national organization in 2004. Wilson’s enthusiastic advocacy for the club led to her election as the 2005–2006 co-president.

“For me, it was the connection to research opportunities.”

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Susi Tomsich

Blisters from new hiking boots led Susi Tomsich to the find of a lifetime.

When the undergraduate geology student’s tender feet curtailed a geologic mapping activity on a Denali National Park field trip, she, along with a professor and another student, focused instead on a small area near the park’s road. Tomsich peered into a crevice and spotted the three-toed footprint of a theropod, a dinosaur that roamed Alaska 70 million years ago.

“I normally wouldn’t have bothered looking there but because we weren’t going far, I paid attention to detail,” she recalls. “That was a lucky find.”

Another lucky find was Alaska itself, which the German native visited on vacation in 1983. She made it her home, and eventually found herself at UAF.

“I always thought about school, but I was computer illiterate,” Tomsich laughs. “So I took classes like keyboarding and computer applications at Tanana Valley Campus. Then I took geology and thought, ‘I like this. I can do this.’ I wanted to know more.”

“That was a lucky find.”

That curiosity led to a 2005 bachelor of science degree in geology with an emphasis in geochemistry, sedimentary rocks and analysis of ancient spores, seeds and pollen.

Since graduating, Tomsich has been exploring job opportunities in Alaska. “Right now I’m focused on getting professional experience before maybe going back to school,” she explains.

Yet somehow she never seems to stray far from the lecture hall; ever the student, Tomsich continues to take classes. “I love the subject so much I want to go into more depth.” And maybe make another great find.
Usibelli Award Winners
The Usibelli Awards for Excellence in Teaching, Research and Public Service, representing UAF’s tripartite mission, are the university’s most prestigious awards. They are funded annually from a $600,000 endowment from the Usibelli Coal Mine.

Dana Thomas—Excellence in Teaching

“...It takes a lot of responsibility to do a good job as a professor and mentor,” says Dana Thomas, professor of statistics. “You have to consciously work at it, refine what you want to get across and how, then assess whether your students got it.”

While working on two UAF contracts with the U.S. Agency for International Development in the Middle East, Thomas learned an Arabic saying that sums up his sense of personal and professional responsibility: “Don’t thank me—it’s my duty.” But while he may see his devotion to his students as simply part of his job, students and colleagues nominated him for the 2005 Award for Excellence in Teaching because they wanted to recognize his outstanding dedication in the classroom over a 25-year teaching career.

“As a Fairbanks native, UAF alumnus, outdoors enthusiast and world traveler, Thomas has a veritable bazaar of examples homespun and exotic he uses to illustrate complex theories. The reward, he says, is “seeing the light go on—seeing the student get the abstract concept and bring it into the practical world.”

John C. Eichelberger—Excellence in Research

John C. Eichelberger is renowned for ground-breaking work on volcanoes that has led to a rethinking of how they operate. Under his leadership, the Alaska Volcano Observatory has become the world’s largest volcano monitoring center, and is helping track the 2006 Augustine Volcano eruptions.

His colleagues heartily endorsed his nomination for the 2005 Award for Excellence in Research, but the volcanologist could just as easily have won the award for teaching or service.

“Research is teaching by doing,” Eichelberger acknowledges. “In truth, most of ‘my’ research is done by students. I’m there to guide them when they need it, and sometimes they guide me.”

Integrating teaching and research is vital to Eichelberger. Research-only centers can become stale without students’ youthful energy, he says, but when university researchers incorporate students into their work, they can involve them in exciting, relevant ways. “Teaching is just passing on old knowledge if it doesn’t include a glimpse of the frontiers of that knowledge.

“For me, to excel in research is to make important and lasting contributions to the body of knowledge. This, along with raising children and mentoring students, gives me a sense of purpose.”

Abel Bult-Ito—Excellence in Service

Abel Bult-Ito studies circadian rhythms in mice—what gets them up, what makes them go to sleep. He might do well to study himself to learn how he gets so much done in one day.

In addition to his associate professorship with the Department of Biology and Wildlife and the Institute of Arctic Biology, Bult-Ito is an energetic volunteer. In the past five years, he has served on more than two dozen committees at the university and in the community.

“I love this type of work,” Bult-Ito enthuses. “With university-wide work you get a good view of the university as a whole. Contributing to that is very satisfying.”

Bult-Ito’s volunteerism ranges from informally mentoring high school students to formal participation in such groups as the UAF Faculty Senate.

“Service is really teamwork,” he notes. “You can’t do it alone. I work with a lot of people from different disciplines but we’re all devoted to the university. I appreciate the Usibelli Service Award because it shows that service really is important.”
Like many Alaskans, Matt Nolan has battled the popular misconception that the 49th state is an island off the west coast of Mexico, as depicted on some maps. Though this confusion is mostly just amusing, other cartographical shortcomings are more serious. Nolan found his research was often compromised by the lack of accurate maps and the ability to easily share geospatial scientific data with others. “I work a lot in remote arctic regions that have only low-quality maps,” Nolan explains. “They’re fine for a hiking trip but not detailed enough for scientific work.”

To become his own mapmaker, Nolan worked with staff at the Institute of Northern Engineering and a student intern at the Arctic Region Supercomputing Center to create EarthSLOT (www.earthslot.org), which merges the best available maps and satellite imagery of the world with the latest information on scientific projects in the Arctic. Using EarthSLOT, one can virtually fly to any location on Earth with 3D perspective.

“Not all H5N1s cause illness in humans,” Runstadler says. “The first question, if someone found H5N1 in a Minto Flats mallard, is ‘What’s it related to? Is it like the H5N1 of Asian origin that kills people or like H5N1s that haven’t affected humans?’”

“Nobody knows if H5N1 will cause an epidemic or if it will fade away. Eventually another new virus will make people sick. Hopefully we’ll have better health-care systems by then and a better understanding of the virus’ biology so we can contain an epidemic, perhaps even predict and avoid it.”

Good investment!
For every dollar of state funds invested in research at UAF, the university leverages another $6.80 from other sources. “...[E]xpansion of university research as an enterprise can contribute to strengthening of the economy in the future. It can contribute to diversity of the economic base, growth in high wage employment, and stability in the work force without adverse impact on the environment, little conflict with other industries, and minimal government administrative cost.”

from “The Economics of University Research,” prepared by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, 2004

Going polar
UAF has a plethora of polar experts playing leading roles in International Polar Year 2007–2008. IPY, the fourth since 1882, is a special program of international scientific and humanities research on the Earth’s polar regions. IPY will educate the world’s peoples about the importance of polar regions, with UAF leading the way as host of the education and outreach office. Visit www.ipty.org to learn more.

Matt Nolan
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“No one knows how these viruses move.”
“It makes remote places come alive.”
Newly minted teachers Ray and Sylvia Joseph share a lot in common with their elementary school students. As Sylvia says of her kindergartners, "It's exciting for them because everything is new. They're wanting to come to school."

Sylvia and her husband, Ray, a fourth-grade teacher, evince that same enthusiasm when talking about teaching in their home village of Alakanuk, in southwest Alaska. They too wanted to go to school; for them, it was to earn bachelor of arts degrees in education so they could become teachers. They graduated from UAF in 2005.

They were motivated by philosophical as well as practical factors. Ray had already been working in bilingual education but as he explains, "I saw certified teachers doing as much as I was but they were getting paid a heck of a lot more. Job opportunities are limited here. To get a good-paying job I could teach in the winter and fish in the summer. Becoming a teacher helped me stay close to home."

As the parents of four children, Ray and Sylvia were also concerned about the constant turnover in the school. "There's a lack of continuity in teachers in Alakanuk," says Sylvia. "They come to get the experience and then they leave. I wanted to be one of the teachers who will be here for a long time."

Respect for culture plays a role in the Josephs' teaching styles as well. Both are native Yup'ik speakers and try to integrate their heritage into the curriculum wherever they can. Although they realize it may be too late to turn the tide of language loss, they try to make Yup'ik less of a "foreign" language by using, for example, the children's Yup'ik names and giving the Yup'ik translation of a new word. Other aspects of the children's heritage are more easily retained. "Some of the kids really love Yup'ik dancing," Ray says. "They're trying to hold onto it.

"I want them to see they can have a future besides just finishing high school and staying at home doing nothing."

What does “economic development” mean at UAF?

Say the words “economic development” at UAF and you’ll get a variety of responses, but the underlying theme of them all is a better life for Alaskans.

Economic development means getting the education to get a good job in the community where you grew up, like the Josephs. It means being able to hire skilled Alaskan workers to expand your business, such as through the construction trades technology program, administered by the Interior-Aleutians campus. And it means conducting the research that leads to new technologies and new industries, as with the Office of Electronic Miniaturization.

With seven campuses and five learning centers throughout Alaska, UAF brings outreach and services to Alaskans wherever they live and work. And by forming reciprocal partnerships with business, industries and communities across Alaska to meet the state's workforce training and development needs, UAF helps ensure a vibrant economic future for the Last Frontier.
Corinn Williams

Corinn Williams never meant to go to UAF, but when her car caught fire in Canada en route from California to attend UAA, she could get it towed only as far as Tok. She unexpectedly found she liked the tiny town but she still wanted her university degree. Then she learned UAF had a long-distance program right there in Tok.

Since then, Williams has been studying via distance delivery for her associate of applied science degree in human services.

“I came from a school where you’re one of 20,000 students; you can get lost,” Williams says. “My advisor and professors care about how I’m doing. They can see the quality of my work and they also know me on a personal basis. I count here.”

There’s more work ahead to earn her bachelor’s and master’s degrees, an even greater challenge now that Williams has a baby daughter, but the new mother is clearly excited. “I’ll stay with UAF for many years. The flexibility with the long-distance courses is wonderful. How many schools can you go to while you stay at home with your child?”

Williams’ dual commitment to education and family won her the George and Miné Mikami Scholarship, which prizes academic achievement and moral character. “Financially it made things a lot easier,” Williams says, but notes that winning the prestigious award was as much a psychological boost as a fiscal one. “It’s an honor. In my application I talked about balancing school and family. I need to provide a solid future for my daughter and set an example of how important school is. My scholarship essay was about real life.”

Alice Snodgrass

Education has been at the center of Alice Snodgrass’ life since she was a little girl. Both her parents had attended university in their native Japan before emigrating to the United States, and they raised their children to pursue their intellectual interests.

In their honor, the four Mikami children established the George and Miné Mikami Scholarship. “One of the reasons we established it was because my parents were very much in favor of education,” Snodgrass remembers. “When my dad came to the United States he continued to go to school. He was great on furthering his education.”

“My parents were very much in favor of education.”

A tradition of philanthropy

For the Usibellis, UAF is a family affair. Since Joseph Sr.’s graduation with a civil engineering degree in 1959, two more generations of the Alaska mining family have earned engineering degrees at UAF.

Strong advocates of the university at all levels, they also played a critical role in the expansion of the UA Museum of the North; the new wing’s centerpiece art gallery was named in honor of Rose Berry, late wife of Usibelli Coal Mine founder Emil Usibelli and mother of Joseph Sr.

In addition to rewarding faculty excellence (see p. 5), the Usibellis have also endowed mining and honors student scholarships. Honors Program Director Roy Bird lauds their long-standing relationship. “The family has funded Usibelli tuition scholarships for students since 1997. More recently, they established an endowment so that each year at least 10 honors students receive $1,000 scholarships because of their philanthropy.”

Visit www.uaf.edu/giving/ to find out more about philanthropy at UAF.
Genevieve Harper believes in making good things even better. The energetic psychology undergraduate has plenty of opportunities to do so as teaching assistant, research assistant, Army National Guard officer, mother and the wife of a soldier deployed to Iraq. A member of the sociology honor society, Alpha Kappa Delta, she is also president of the UAF chapter of Psi Chi, the psychology honors organization. She knew the tiny club had big potential.

“It’s a great organization but it was small, and I wanted more people to know about it. Psi Chi educates students about job opportunities, community involvement and undergraduate psychology research. We also do a lot of fun things, like bowling, dinners out and a Christmas toy drive. I want people to want to participate.”

Participate they did. In one semester, Psi Chi membership tripled.

Stationed at Fort Wainwright with her husband, Harper began studying for her bachelor’s degree in psychology at UAF. She plans to graduate in May 2006 and is currently assessing doctoral programs, including the new UAF/UAA joint Ph.D. program in clinical-community psychology with a rural and indigenous focus.

Harper hopes to combine her professional expertise as a psychologist with her personal experiences in military life. “Issues like deployment and moving really impact children and family relationships. I like working with soldiers. I know what they endure.”

Walter Fourie likes to get off the beaten path—he just never thought his path would be frozen. But the South African Ph.D. candidate has no regrets. He arrived in Fairbanks in 2003 intending to earn just his master’s degree in environmental engineering, then signed on for a doctoral program as well.

“Alaska kind of grows on you,” Fourie admits. “Most memorable was catching a 155-pound halibut in Seward. Another time at the hot springs it was 50 below. It was great, even though my hair was so frosted it was cracking off.”

Frost and ice are exactly what Fourie and a team of graduate and undergraduate students are researching at UAF “I study how ice forms in soils like gravel pads, and how thaw causes rutting and weakening,” he says.

“The research we do is applicable anywhere.”

“In a cold region you want to know how ice forms and how water moves through the frozen soil. To contain ground contamination you use a permeable reactive barrier like activated carbon to clean the groundwater that flows through it. If ice forms in the barrier, it decreases the efficiency.

“The research we do is applicable anywhere there’s human activity in the Arctic or Antarctic,” he says. In other words, right where Fourie likes to go: off the beaten path.

Growth in enrollment numbers is up for all majors. This year, the number of majors in political science increased by 69 percent and psychology 50 percent. Although numbers for other programs showed declines, civil engineering experienced a large increase (43 percent).

www.uaf.edu
Real training, real jobs
The Tanana Valley Campus received a three-year $1.99 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to strengthen training in Interior Alaska’s energy, construction, mining and power generation industries.

“We want to produce qualified graduates as quickly as possible so that they can move into the workforce,” Caulfield says. “With expanding employment in construction, mining, tourism and possibly gas line development, the time is right to expand the pool of skilled workers.”

Career allies
Fairbanks Memorial Hospital is an active partner in helping the Tanana Valley Campus expand its allied health programs, providing grants and clinical space for the TVC/UAA radiologic technology program. TVC’s allied health programs, which include medical assistant, dental assistant, phlebotomy, medical/dental receptionist and health care reimbursement, were created to help meet the high-demand employment needs of the health care industry.

The grant involves a partnership of five community groups, including TVC, the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, Alaska Job Center, Operating Engineers Local 302 and Interior Alaska Regional Council. It will enable TVC to train workers for jobs in high-growth, high-demand industries, including process technology, automotive technology, diesel/heavy equipment and drafting/CADD technologies.

“This proposal succeeded because of our community partnerships,” says TVC Director Rick Caulfield. “Business, labor, government and TVC worked to identify the need, create innovative workforce training strategies and develop measurable goals.”

TVC had wide support from businesses such as BP, Golden Valley Electric Association, Seekins Ford, NAPA Auto Parts and Gene’s Chrysler Center.

The grant will allow workers to complete workforce development programs in a compressed, nine-month format so students can quickly put their job skills to work.

Jobs in process
The Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium is an industry-led workforce non-profit that works closely with the process technology program at the Tanana Valley Campus, as well as other University of Alaska campuses. TVC offers a two-year associate of applied science degree in process technology. The joint efforts of APICC and the university are helping meet the workforce needs of the Alaska processing industry, which includes oil and gas production, transportation and refining, mining, and power generation.

High-tech homes
The Cold Climate Housing Research Center (www.cchrc.org) offers a pioneering collaboration between private industry and university research. CCHRC’s Research Test Facility, housed on UAF’s Fairbanks campus, will allow university researchers to work cooperatively with private industry on construction issues in cold regions. Some of the past and proposed UAF-affiliated projects include:

• Constructing rainwater catchments for safe drinking water
• Testing and improving new wastewater treatment processes
• Improving indoor air quality in homes
• Developing an energy and sustainability extension program in rural Alaska

Building communities
The Interior-Aleutians Campus works with the Interior Regional Housing Authority and the Tanacross Village Council to provide construction trades technology courses to students in eight villages. Thanks to a grant from Housing and Urban Development’s Alaska Native-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities program, students get both classroom and paid, hands-on training on construction projects in or near their home villages, reducing costs and improving retention. Students who complete the course work receive college credit and certification by the National Center for Construction Education and Research; some continue as employees of the program’s partner agencies.
Cool school
Every summer, middle and high school students work with university faculty and staff and get hands-on experience in the sciences, engineering and other select disciplines. Since it began in 2001, some 400 students from Alaska and the Lower 48 states have completed the Alaska Summer Research Academy on the Fairbanks campus. ASRA is offered by the College of Natural Science and Mathematics in cooperation with other schools and institutes on the UAF campus and through industry partnerships, including the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Golden Valley Electric Association, National Park Service, Denali Institute and Denali Foundation.

Energizing education
Flint Hills Resources is a valuable corporate partner that supports UAF scholarship and research in a variety of ways. In addition to applying for the recently endowed Flint Hills Resources Scholarship, students can seek needs-based fee and tuition grants, take advantage of a range of internships from accounting to engineering, and benefit from funds that support undergraduate and faculty research projects. Other Flint Hills Resources donations have gone to the Nanook athletics teams and the UA Museum of the North's earth sciences laboratory and school tour programs.

A culture of collaboration
The partnership between UAF and the Fairbanks Symphony Association is a collaborative effort that has enhanced the educational mission of the university and the cultural life of the community for nearly half a century. UAF offers financial and logistical support to the symphony—including a home in the C.W. Davis Concert Hall—while the symphony provides formal training and performance experience to students in the College of Liberal Arts' music department. Together with UAF, the Fairbanks Symphony Association shares its musical artistry with Alaskans throughout the state through its youth programs, touring productions and season performances.

Photo © Chris Cruthers
President’s Professor Eduard Zilberkant conducts the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra during a performance of the opera Carmen in the Davis Concert Hall in April 2005.
Student profile—fall 2005

- Total enrollment ........................................... 9,380
- Female ............................................................ 59%
- Male ............................................................... 41%
- Alaska Native/American Indian ................... 21%
- Undergraduate/other ...................................... 88%
- Graduate ......................................................... 12%

Standout students

- 586 UA Scholars
- 250 Honors Program students

Advanced education

- UAF offers 165 degrees and 26 certificates in 116 disciplines
- UAF awarded 987 certificates and degrees to 951 students in spring 2005:
  - 726 certificates, associate or baccalaureate degrees
  - 261 master’s and doctoral degrees

Estimated 2005–2006 UAF annual costs*

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*Assumes full credit load, double room occupancy and 19 meals/week on campus