

## 4. Development of the Campus

### THE EARLY CAMPUS

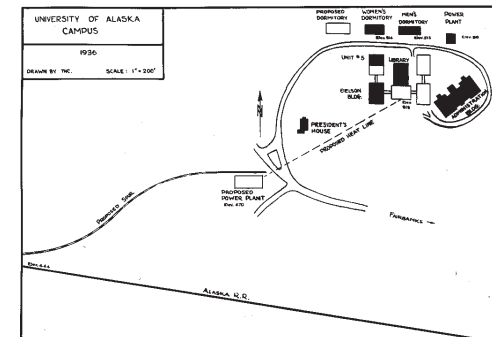
The campus property was first developed in 1907 with the establishment of the Agricultural Experiment Station. The first campus building, the “Main Building” constructed in 1918 and dedicated in 1922, was sited high on College Hill (close to the current location of the Fountain of Flags plaza) to take advantage of the spectacular views across the Tanana Valley to Denali and the Alaska Range. From the outset, the harsh climate, rugged topography and continual struggle for funds led to a practical approach to the campus.

The original wood-frame campus buildings were clustered together, but with no formal organization and the land around the Main Building was cleared and planted with hay to feed the dairy herd at the experimental station. According to the college's first president, Charles Bunnell, keeping construction and maintenance costs as low as possible in the subarctic environment left “only a restricted opportunity for esthetic treatment.”

The first plan for the campus, conceived by Bunnell in the mid-1930s, called for six “permanent” reinforced concrete buildings arranged in a quadrangle. Only the library-gymnasium-museum (now Signers' Hall) located at the center of the quadrangle, the Eielson Building in the southwest corner and a building in the northwest corner were completed. Besides Signers' Hall and the Eielson Building, the only other campus building remaining from this era, in its original location, is Rainey/Skarland Cabin, a log home built in 1937 by anthropologist Froelich Rainey on the upper campus or what was then called Rainey Ridge.



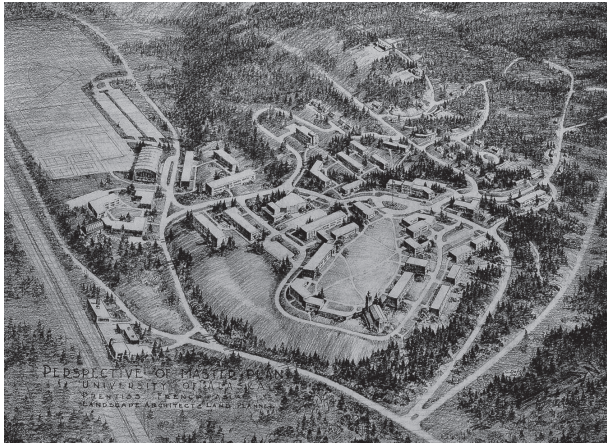
*A view of the early campus*



*The 1936 plan*

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Information on the development of the campus comes primarily from Professor Terrence Cole's history of UAF, *The Cornerstone on College Hill*, published by University of Alaska Press in 1994. A detailed description of the history of campus planning at UAF can be found in the University of Alaska Fairbanks 1991 master plan report.



*The Prentiss French plan*

## 1940S

During World War II, enrollment fell drastically, courses were cut and, for almost two years, about two-thirds of the campus was used by the army. By 1949, the campus still consisted of a haphazard collection of wooden buildings, a power plant and three concrete buildings from the 1930s. In the late 1940s, the Bunnell plan was expanded to include more concrete dormitories to meet rising post-War enrollment.

## 1950S—PRENTISS FRENCH PLAN

In 1950, San Francisco landscape architect Prentiss French was hired to develop a new campus plan, based on a projected enrollment of 1,500 students. Contending that the Bunnell plan's north-south grid worked at odds with the site's topography, French departed from its rigid geometric layout, creating a more flexible plan that nestled buildings into the existing forest in an east/west direction parallel to the contours.

The academic core was designed as an open campus green, with buildings ringing the edge of College Hill to fit within the topography and take advantage of the views. The plan greatly expanded the scope of the campus, proposing major residential development from southwest to northwest of the academic core and a physical education complex and power plant roughly in their present locations. Although greatly modified, the French plan established the basic pattern of campus land use. Two buildings that were part of the plan were built in the early 1950s: the Alfred Brooks Memorial Mines Building and Nerland Hall, the second concrete dormitory built on campus.

The 1950s saw an explosion of new construction. At the rate of one new building a year, eight buildings were constructed between 1954 and 1960: the president's house in 1954, Stuart Hall (apartments) and Constitution Hall (student union) in 1955, McIntosh Hall (men's dorm) in 1956, Wickersham Hall (women's dorm) in 1957, Stevens Hall (men's dorm) in 1958, Walsh Hall (married student housing) in 1959 and the Bunnell Building (library, administration, classrooms) in 1960.

The Main Building, which still served as the university hub despite its hazardous condition, was torn down in 1960 after completion of the Bunnell Building. Site improvements also were made, including concrete sidewalks, paved roads, parking lots and streetlights. The expansion of the campus allowed the university to host Alaska's Constitutional Convention in

1955-56. The state's constitution was hammered out in what is now Constitution Hall and the document was signed in Signers' Hall.

## STANFORD PLAN

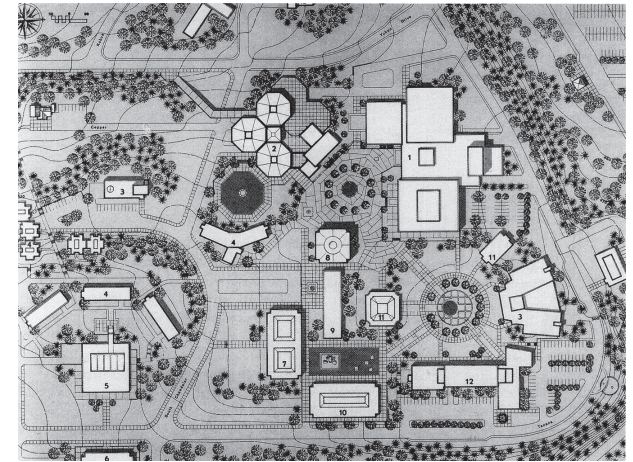
With Alaska's admission as a state in 1959 and a wave of baby boomers reaching college age, the university foresaw a possible doubling of enrollment within the next few years. To plan for the surge in enrollment, the university administration and board of regents commissioned a long-range development plan in 1959 to guide the growth of the university over the next 50 years.

The plan, designed by James MacConnell, director of the school planning bureau at Stanford University and San Francisco architects Lawrence Lackey, Donald Knoff and Mario Ciampi, envisioned enrollment growth to 5,000 by 1975, a figure not reached until the restructuring of the university system in 1987. The design team presented two options for development: a dispersed collection of smaller buildings or a concentration of high-rise buildings connected by underground tunnels. The board of regents unanimously chose the dispersed campus, which would allow more opportunities for views, light and air.

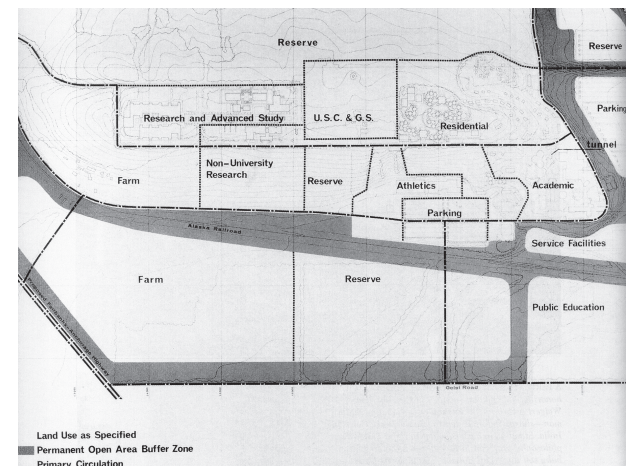
The “Stanford Plan” created a pedestrian inner core with parking kept at the periphery. The nucleus of the academic core was a park-like central green, dense with birch trees, encircling Wickersham Hall, Constitution Hall and the Eielson Building. Classrooms were located around the green within a three-minute walking distance of one another, with residences located in a six-minute walking circle beyond them. Of significance to the future development of the campus, the plan located research institutes “unrelated to undergraduate instruction” in a more distant location on the top of what became known as West Ridge. In addition to mapping the physical layout of the campus, the plan also recommended that the university build on its strength as an arctic institution.

## 1968 LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Although the central green was never realized, the Stanford Plan served as the basic blueprint of the UAF campus and was modified in the 1968 long range development plan, which envisioned the campus as a “closely knit pedestrian precinct,” with buildings clustered around a series of interconnecting plazas. The 1968 plan is a close approximation of the campus as it



*1968 Long Range Development Plan - site plan*



*1968 Long-Range Development Plan - land use plan*





*West Ridge plaza...*



*Looking east*



*Looking west*

exists today. However, the proposed museum and statewide administration building were located on the West Ridge rather than in the core as planned and a proposed law-pharmacy-nursing school south of the Eielson Building and a general use facility on the site of Signers' Hall were never constructed.

The intent of the site plan, which created a logical circulation pattern and kept parking outside the core, was never fully realized. With the exception of the Fountain of Flags, conceived as the central open space and constructed with some changes (an arbor of birches and a sculpture were never built) and Constitution Park, which remained a mud hole until 1982, the cohesive pedestrian environment proposed by the plan was never created.

### **1960 - 1970—DEVELOPMENT OF WEST RIDGE**

Like other universities, UAF experienced tremendous enrollment growth and program expansion throughout the 60s and early 70s. Between 1960 and 1970, total undergraduate and graduate enrollment at UAF increased from 921 to 3,645. Also during this period, UAF became a major research center. The West Ridge provided land that the university could freely offer U.S. government agencies that wished to construct federally funded arctic research facilities. The cow pasture on the West Ridge, separated from the main campus by land that had been leased to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in the 1940s, became the heart of the university's research and advanced study area.

The first arctic research facilities opened in 1965 and included the Alaska Water Laboratory of the Arctic Health Research Center and the Irving Building. The Elvey Building opened in 1970 to house the Geophysical Institute and the William A. O'Neill Resources Building opened in 1973.

Between 1960 and 1973, building square footage on the campus tripled from 427,000 to 1.35 million square feet. Three new facilities were completed on Lower Campus: the Rasmuson Library and Fine Arts Complex (housing music, art and theatre departments); the Gruening Building (housing offices and classrooms); and Wood Center, the new student activities center. Construction of four new residence halls—Lathrop, Moore, Bartlett and Skarland—nearly tripled the number of dormitory beds in less than eight years. Other buildings constructed during this period include Lola Tilly Commons, Hess Commons, the Patty Center and a new steam power plant. Faculty housing also expanded with 15 new duplexes constructed on Chandalar Avenue.



## 1975—CREATION OF THE UA SYSTEM

In September 1975, UAF enrollment fell to its lowest level since 1967. That same year saw the restructuring and decentralization of the university system and the expansion of the community college system. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, construction of new facilities on the Fairbanks campus slowed due to competing needs of the many other campuses and fluctuating state revenues. Capital improvements focused on additions and improvements to existing facilities. No new buildings were constructed until 1980 when the Otto W. Geist Building, housing the new museum, was completed on the West Ridge between the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey building and the Arctic Health Research Center. In 1985, the Cutler Apartment Complex was completed and the Butrovich Building, housing statewide administration, opened with occupancy on the second floor.



*Butrovich Building*

## 1986 - 1987—RESTRUCTURING OF THE UA SYSTEM AND CAMPUSES

In 1986, due to decreasing state revenues from oil production, state funding to the UA system was dramatically reduced. In response, the board of regents initiated a major restructuring of the statewide system and individual campuses from 1986 to 1987, with the result that UAF became a multi-campus university with responsibility for branch campuses in Dillingham, Bethel, Nome and Kotzebue. The restructuring added community college, technical/ vocational, extension service and rural-based education to the undergraduate and graduate instruction previously offered by UAF and brought a wide range of non-traditional students to UAF.

## 1991 CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

In the late 1980s, the Master Planning Committee developed a new master plan for the campus. There were over 30 members on the committee and the planning process for the 1991 plan never achieved campus consensus. The plan envisioned a unified campus with primary emphasis given to the pedestrian, but offered no short-term solutions for achieving the vision. Key elements of the plan were:

- Pedestrian spine connecting the West Ridge and Lower Campus.
- Expanded on-campus transportation system (shuttle bus).



*View of the Natural Sciences Facility*



*Natural Sciences Facility in winter*

- Completion of the loop road and development of a system of perimeter parking lots.
- Concentration of future academic growth along Yukon Drive.
- “Town Center” located south of the upper dorms across Yukon Drive as a meeting place for the main east-west and north-south pedestrian axes and a site for future facilities.
- Preserving and enhancing the natural setting with more plantings around buildings as the primary means of achieving harmony as well as a coordinated color and materials scheme for buildings and site furnishings and artwork.
- Research park, located between the railroad and Geist Road, to attract further research support and develop links with industry.

### **1990 - 2000**

New construction on campus since completion of the 1991 plan has included the Natural Sciences Facility (NSF) for undergraduate physical sciences instruction (1992), the Institute of Arctic Biology Greenhouse (1994) and the International Arctic Research Center (1999) on West Ridge. The three structures totaled 233,925 gross square feet of additional space.

During the late 80s and early 90s, the State Fire Marshal's Office cited extensive life-safety code violations that brought to light the university's significant deferred maintenance problems in its existing buildings. Many of the now 30+year-old buildings were having roof failures and housing new users and functions that were not compatible with existing ventilation systems.

UAF hired architects and engineers to review these issues. With support of the regents and state Legislature, substantial funding was expended to renovate existing residence halls and older academic facilities to correct code violations, update old building systems and implement modest handicap accessibility improvements. During this time, the university also installed a campus-wide security phone system adjacent to major facilities and parking areas and expanded the shuttle bus system. In response to new communications technology, high speed IT connectivity has been extended to all major academic and residential facilities on campus. Although not yet completed, deferred maintenance projects are continuing on a regularly scheduled basis, with significant improvements to buildings resulting throughout campus.



Little investment was made in the early 1990s to campus grounds with the exception of reopening the old southeast campus entrance at Alumni Drive adjacent to the Physical Plant. Since the inception of this master planning study in February 2001, a number of campus site improvements have been made, including a landscaped stairway leading from the Moore-Bartlett-Skarland complex to Lola Tilly Commons and a widened sidewalk along the north side of Yukon Drive between Wood Center and the residence complex. A new south entrance to campus from Geist Road at Loftus will be constructed beginning in the summer of 2002.

