



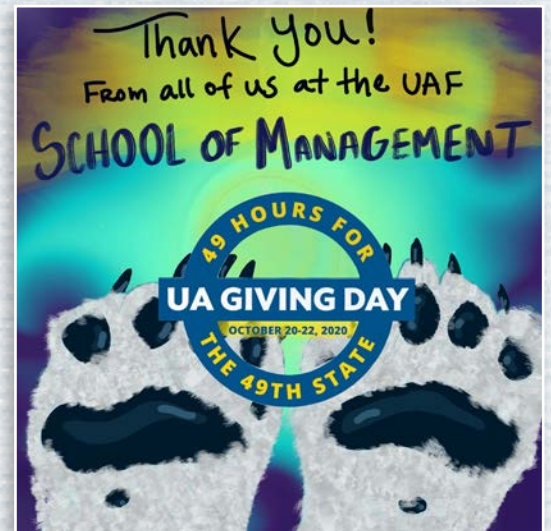
UA Giving Day Takes its Place in History

This fall, the University of Alaska hosted its first-ever Giving Day. In true Alaskan style, UA Giving Day was expanded into “49 Hours for the 49th State,” and included all three UA campuses. UA Giving Day’s goals focused on participation, engagement and setting a new Giving Day tradition. We weren’t sure what to expect and had all kinds of contingency plans, but within hours we were stunned by the virtual turnout.

With challenge gifts from Usibelli Coal Mine, Spirit of Alaska FCU and Dean Mark Herrmann, along with 82 donors, the School of Management raised \$138,802, which represented 21% of the gifts across the UA system.

“I was impressed with the first UA Giving Day, and now many of our students, alumni and community members participated,” said SOM Dean Mark Herrmann. *“It was like a big, online family reunion. I was honored to kick it off with the Dean’s Challenge to inspire others to give and to be a part of the celebration. I am so thankful for the support that SOM has!”*

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Digital art by Jillian Bjornstad BBA '20, MBA student and teaching assistant.



Joe Usibelli Sr. (left) and Joe Usibelli Jr. (right) teaming up at work and in their philanthropic philosophies.

Usibelli Coal Mine: Generations of Support Inspire Others to Give

Usibelli Coal Mine has a long history of altruistic support in Interior Alaska, including 43 years of proudly celebrating and partnering with UAF. Support for education has been a hallmark of the leadership of UCM President Joe Usibelli Jr. '81. Over the years, UCM has donated more than \$5.2 million to the university.

Usibelli Coal Mine’s altruistic support is relevant and timely - in tune with the pulse of students and adjusting to the landscape of need. The company has been a leader, as well as a pioneer, in its philanthropic efforts.

Over the past two years, UCM has donated \$350,000 to SOM, providing significant support to the Applied Management program, the Homeland Security and Emergency Management program, and as the presenting sponsor of the UAF Arctic Innovation Competition. These gifts were in addition to the endowed UCM scholarships housed in SOM, which award two students \$5,000 each per year for up to four years.

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The Path to Partnership at a “Big 4” Accounting Firm

Mike Fink is a UAF School of Management alumnus who earned degrees in accounting and business administration (with a finance concentration) in 2003 and 2004. His recent promotion to partner at KPMG’s Anchorage office makes him the first SOM graduate to become a partner at one of the “Big 4,” meaning the four largest accounting firms in the world.

In both school and the workplace, Mike has found that people who seek out opportunities to get involved are more likely to succeed. Because of this, he advises students to get involved with a SOM organization. He also feels that making connections and building relationships is important. Instructors can be a source of guidance, can share potential opportunities and are often willing to provide professional references.

Due to his promotion, Mike’s role in professional and educational relationships is evolving. Building relationships has become an important part of Mike’s leadership style. *“Your place of employment is where you meet people who will be a part of your life for a long time,”* Mike said. *“Ideally, you will maintain many of these relationships even after you or those around you leave the company.”* Mike does his best to lead his fellow employees in the right direction and provide guidance to help them be successful. Because advice and connections with others were so important to Mike’s success, he is giving back by providing advice and connections to other people.

[Explore More!](#)



Mike Fink, his wife Claire Norton-Cruz, their daughter Fiona, and their Vizsla dogs.

SOM Success: Three Inspiring Stories of Career Advancement

As the BAM program gains more interest from incoming students, SOM wanted to find out why students chose to advance their technical education to the management level. These three driven individuals boosted their already established careers. They are examples of what emerging managers look like.

Matt Mercier, current BAM student working at ExxonMobil, decided he wanted to advance in his career. As he pursues his degree, he is able to gain immediate hands-on experience that prepares him to take on management roles. *“The BAM program gives me the business education that I need to really progress throughout my career. It has changed my future, and now I have job opportunities that weren’t previously available to me.”*

Maddy Case is also a current BAM student, and she is working at Fairbanks Orthodontic Group while pursuing her education. Maddy chose the BAM program because it put her in control of her career and educational future. *“I am not a person who knows 100% what I want to do. What I do know is that I want to do something that I’m in control of, and for me pursuing a BAM degree is a big step in that direction.”*

Brennan Palmer graduated from the BAM program in 2020, and is continuing his career at Doyon Utilities. He chose the BAM program because he could customize the program to fit what he needed to be successful in his career. *“With an associate degree and eight years of experience as an operator, I felt I had topped out in my field. After completing my bachelor’s degree, I am prepared for the next step in my career.”*



Matt Mercier flashing a smile on the job.

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Anton Martinsson Stays Square to the Puck and His Academics



Anton Martinsson with another save for the UAF Nanooks!

UAF alumnus Anton Martinsson graduated in 2020 with a BBA in business administration with a concentration in finance. He has moved on to pursue his MBA and continues to play hockey at Providence College in Rhode Island.

When reflecting upon his experience at SOM, Anton said his experience could not have been complete without amazing faculty support, like that of Amy Cooper. As one of his accounting instructors, Amy helped him build confidence and adapt to the culture shock of the American collegiate system.

Looking back on his four years at SOM, Anton expressed a new appreciation for a university that is just top notch. He went on to say that there's a reason why SOM is AACSB-accredited, and why students achieve great things afterwards.

As a goalie for the UAF Nanooks, he developed friendships with his teammates and former coach that have continued even after his UAF career finished.

"Anton was a fantastic teammate who encouraged others around him to be better every day," UAF hockey coach Erik Largen said. *"He has a fire inside of him to be the best he can be at whatever he is doing and wherever he is doing it."*

The kind of connections Anton made on the ice, in the classroom and around the community inspired him to become a UA Giving Day Ambassador this past October. In true Nanook fashion, Anton helped give back to the school that supported him.

Now that Anton is in graduate school, he is taking those lessons he learned at SOM and is prepared to do great things there, too. Although he is not sure what the future has in store for him, he knows he is better prepared for it because of SOM.

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Sport & Recreation Business Fall Speaker Series

SOM's Sport and Recreation Business program hosted a Fall Speaker Series to provide more opportunities for online engagement, community and network building for students. The monthly virtual events allowed UAF students, faculty, staff, and community members to interact with knowledgeable sport industry professionals from across the country.

Speaker series topics included:

- First Impressions & Building a Meaningful Network
- Sport for Social Change
- Telling a Story with Data and Analytics
- The Landscape of eSports

"We wanted our students to be able to connect directly with sport business professionals and learn first-hand about real-world issues and trends in the sport business industry,"

~ Dr. Peggy Keiper, associate professor and program director

"This speaker series was a great opportunity for attendees to start building their network by connecting with panelists after the event," said series moderator, SOM instructor, and Manager of Corporate Partnerships Marketing for the Dallas Cowboys, Michelle Guilino. *"Hearing from real industry experts from diverse backgrounds and lines of work is incredibly beneficial to each attendee's professional and personal development."*

All of the events were recorded and are available for viewing on the [SOM website](#). The Sport and Recreation Business program will be hosting another speaker series in the spring. We hope to see you there!

UA Giving Day...

(continued)

Increased Awareness of Needs

With an amplified online presence, a collaborative effort and a dedicated UA Giving Day website, we increased the number of people we reached with our message about our current needs. Simply put, with a postponed UAF Business Leader of the Year event and lost revenue, we welcomed a new platform to raise money for our students.

Exceeded Expectations

With UA Giving Day in the history books, we are tickled blue and gold that this inaugural experience exceeded all expectations. The virtual event presented an opportunity for schools and units to work together toward a common goal. At times, it was a bit crazy as it takes a core of about 40 people to host an event of this caliber.

Strengthened Sense of Pride & Connection

One of the most impactful aspects of UA Giving Day was the outlet it provided for faculty, staff, students, donors and friends to come together. We heard from alumni in Ireland, Sweden and from all over Alaska. It brought about a strengthened sense of pride and connection to SOM. We heard several stories of favorite classes, shared Business Leader of the Year experiences and even Nanook romances!

UAF School of Management thanks all donors, ambassadors and friends for bringing us together in celebration of our students and our school to make #UAGivingDay2020 a success!

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Usibelli Coal Mine...

(continued)

Most recently, UCM made significant and impactful contributions to SOM during the first UA Giving Day, "49 Hours for the 49th State," held Oct. 20-22., 2020

UCM's giving day challenge donation to SOM, at \$100,000 total, was split between the Homeland Security and Emergency Management program and the Bachelor of Applied Management program.

"Having leadership from Usibelli Coal Mine believe in these students - and not only their education, but their future careers - is vital," said Amanda White, BAM program director. *"It is a belief in the betterment of our leaders, our organizations and our communities that these students will impact."*

With such incredible generosity, one might wonder what inspires UCM to continue to give.

"Giving back to our community is part of our mission as a family," said Joe Usibelli Jr. '81, in a 2017 interview. He added that, *"The university has touched every aspect of my life."*

He encourages others to *"give often and give significantly if you can. It makes us who we are."*

He echoes the sentiment of his father, Joe Usibelli Sr. '59 and '96H, who said in 2011, *"You give back. You have to. Either that or you're not doing it right."*

[Explore More!](#)



Any day can be a giving day! Amid the COVID pandemic, students' needs have changed quickly. Funds for students who need immediate financial relief

in order to stay enrolled during these challenging times are increasingly important. Make your gift online at engage.alaska.edu/uaf/som or email uafsom@alaska.edu.



You can read enhanced versions of the stories in this newsletter online, with expanded content and additional photos.

www.uaf.edu/som/news/newsletters



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SOM is one of only about 1.5% of colleges and universities in the world to hold the prestigious Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation for both the School of Management and its Accounting program. UA is an AA/EO employer and educational institution and prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual: www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination.

PHOTO CREDITS Pg 1: UAF Photo (header); Digital art created by Jillian Bjornstad (top); Courtesy of Usibelli Coal Mine (bottom). Pg 2: Courtesy of Mike Fink (top); Courtesy of Matt Mercier (bottom). Pg 3: Courtesy of Paul H. McCarthy.