Editor’s Note  I’ve enjoyed watching the CLA magazine grow over the last few years. When fate came knocking I jumped at the chance to be more involved with this issue and incorporate some suggestions from alumni and staff along with some of my own ideas. What was once called CLA Special Edition maintains its editorial integrity, though the look is different and a new nameplate is on the cover. The important things — the people, ideas and energy that make the UAF College of Liberal Arts so exceptional — are all still found in these pages.

About the new name. *clarity:* When I graduated with my BA in social work in 2006 I heard the name “College of Liberal Arts” for what seemed like the first time. What is CLA? The pursuit of that answer inspired our new name. What better way to remind all of the alumni and friends of the college that CLA is in part, a vision of clarity for our futures than to put it right there on our cover? The dictionary defines “clarity” in the obvious and impersonal way: lucidity or clearness as to perception or understanding, but here’s how I define it: the sincere feeling in my heart that I could actually achieve my dreams. This feeling was sparked, flamed and fueled by the coursework and faculty of UAF’s CLA.

We hope you enjoy the new look and continuing mission of *clarity.*

— Naomi Horne, CFRE
2006 CLA Social Work, BA

The Human Dimension

*I am passionate about* the work I do. As an artist my work is inspired by my experiences, my concepts, my understanding of the formal elements of art and by the limitations and possibilities of materials. The same process informs my work leading the College of Liberal Arts. CLA is blessed with a diverse group of departments and programs and dynamic faculty, staff and students. To be successful in all endeavors, we have to be flexible, creative, hardworking and we must collaborate with others across disciplines.

CLA is a microcosm of UAF. We introduce students to the arts, humanities, languages and social and behavioral sciences. Our courses and out-of-classroom experiences address the human dimension: language, culture, thought, creative endeavors, history, politics and the many modalities of communication. With an education in the liberal arts, the engineer, the historian, the astrophysicist, the archaeologist and the teacher all have the foundation of critical thinking and communication skills necessary to succeed in their diverse and complex career paths.

At CLA we work to provide students with the tools to adapt and thrive in a changing world and work environment. Thriving in life and at work requires a passion for learning and an openness to new ideas as well as a broad and versatile knowledge base. That is the hallmark of what we teach here in the College of Liberal Arts.

— Todd Sherman, Dean

above: photo by Jim Baez shear
Grease Fire!
Turning garbage oil into ceramic art

Through Our Lens
Maya Salganek on Alaska’s only film degree

Art Fusions: Traditional and Modern
Art and culture and a crooked knife

Ray Barnhardt: Make Education Meaningful
Crossing cultures in the classroom

The Frontier Romance
Professor Emeritus Judy Kleinfeld describes her most recent book

Sharing Alaska’s History
Western History Association comes to Fairbanks

Transplanted Social Worker
The Lal family honors their courageous father, Banarsi

Key Musician
Eduard Zilberkant, faculty spotlight

A Short Life Well-Lived
Remembering Adrina Knutson

At Home in the North
Anthropology PhD student finds a home in the North

A Major Switch
UAF student goes to Hollywood

About the writer
This year’s magazine was written by Danny Dyer. He is an MA/MFA English graduate student who, upon completion of his degrees, hopes to teach English overseas while working on his fiction and poetry.

Meet the editorial group
Professor Eric Heyne, PhD, English Department; Assistant Professor Lynne Lott, Journalism Department; Kim Davis, managing editor of Aurora magazine, Marketing and Communications; Art Professor and CLA Dean Todd Sherman; Danny Dyer, clarity magazine writer; and Naomi Horne, clarity magazine editor and CLA’s development officer.

Special thanks
To Assistant Professor Daryl Farmer, English Department; Associate Professor Joseph Thompson, Philosophy and Humanities Department; Brehana Yauney, CLA Dean’s office, Shelbie Umphenour, last year’s editor and now School of Management Academic Advisor, and all who shared their stories to make this publication a success.

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Editor/Art Director: Naomi Horne
Design: EERL Graphics/Dixon Jones
Cover: Student pottery finished in the waste oil kiln. UAF photo by Todd Paris.

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The University of Alaska Fairbanks is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. UAF is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educational institution.
Though it’s common for ceramics students to study kiln design as part of their graduate education, MFA student Heidi Morel wanted to go even further and less conventional—to build a kiln that runs almost entirely on used vegetable oil. Heidi’s advisor, Professor of Ceramics Jim Brashear, has built a handful of kilns in his 19 years with UAF, but he knew this kiln would present unique challenges.

According to Jim, waste-oil needs to reach temperatures around seven-hundred degrees before it will burn, requiring an incendiary fuel source to reach the combustion point.

“The natural fuel to combine it with was wood,” Jim says. “We designed a kiln from scratch that started with wood as fuel and eventually transferred over to the waste oil for fuel.”

With a grant from the UAF Office of Sustainability in 2011, Heidi and Jim began drafting plans and purchasing supplies for their hybrid kiln. Much of the refractory material for the kiln’s structure would come from surplus Jim had collected over the years from local sources such as power plants and crematoriums.

With Jim and Heidi at the helm, students in a Summer Sessions kiln design and construction class worked to bring the kiln from concept to completion, acquiring in-depth knowledge of kiln construction along with unique experience working with a prototypical design. Heidi fondly remembers the research necessary for the undertaking.

“I was really surprised by how interdisciplinary it was,” she says. “We had to learn about carpentry, masonry, history, and physics.”

Over the course of the summer the kiln quickly came together, and by the end of the session it was ready to be fired. When asked if UAF’s new waste-oil kiln had trouble reaching appropriate temperatures, Jim grins and leans forward in his chair.

“Our waste oil kiln is the top one in the nation, I’ll flat out say it. The first time we fired it, it shot up to 2,500 degrees in only five hours. That rapid rise in heat destroyed ninety-percent of the student work inside.”

After the initial hiccup, they were able to adjust the fuel delivery so the kiln leveled out at more appropriate temperatures. Around 30 gallons of waste-oil are consumed in the firing process, with about 200 student pieces firing inside the 40 cubic foot kiln. Originally Jim and Heidi looked to UAF’s Lola Tilly Commons for waste-oil and transported it back to the art department for filtering, a chore Jim recalls not too fondly.
“We used to screen the oil with paint screens, and the amount of bacon bits and French fries we’d find was really gross. I spilled a barrel of oil in the back of my pick-up truck. I’ve never been able to get it all out.”

These days the kiln is fired a few times every semester, with 50 to 60 students participating in the three-day firing process. Fairbanks’ Princess Riverside Lodge donates its waste-oil, which is run through an elaborate screening process before delivery. For this generosity, Jim and his students couldn’t be more grateful.

For more information about ceramics and Summer Sessions at UAF visit www.uaf.edu/art/areas/ceramics/ and www.uaf.edu/summer/.

“The first time we fired it, it shot up to 2,500 degrees in only five hours.”
Feature-length films are made in Alaska, but until recently, Alaskans haven't been making most of them. While the state offers tax incentives encouraging producers to hire locally, a shortage of skilled workers leaves Alaskans largely out of the loop, and film crews tend to bring their key personnel with them from the Lower 48.

Assistant Professor of Film and Film Program Director Maya Salganek has had first-hand experience with Alaska filmmaking. In her 12 years at UAF, she's collaborated on and produced a handful of independent films, including 2007’s Chronic Town, an official selection of the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, and 2011’s AlaskaLand.

“I’d be in Point Hope working on a film project, and I’d see two other film crews there,” Maya says. “Or I’d be in Barrow, and I’d see the Discovery Channel was there and National Geographic. These people would just blow into town, do their shoot and leave.”

For years Maya had been an advocate for student film production, overseeing the UAF Film Club and student internships with visiting production companies, but she always recognized the need for an in-state training program. In 2011 a degree proposal championed by Maya and the Film Program Working Group, a collaboration of faculty from the theater, journalism, art and English departments, eventually made its way to the Board of Regents. Alaska’s first accredited film program was up and running.

Rather than hire a slew of new instructors, the inter-disciplinary program enlisted primary faculty from art, theater, journalism and English with ancillary courses offered in foreign languages, history and Alaska Native studies. Students majoring in the program receive a wide-angle education in filmmaking, covering such topics as film history, theory and production while also working in real studio settings with equipment comparable to what they’ll find on a commercial production set. When asked about the program, a bright smile crosses Maya’s face.

“The aim of the degree is to give people a foundation in filmmaking from a variety of perspectives. You can learn what good storytelling is and how to make a compelling story, through screenwriting and preproduction, rough cuts, fine cuts and audio design.”

Since its 2011 inception the program has graduated four students with 14 majors currently in progress, four pre-majors, and approximately 20 minors. Currently five of Maya’s students are working on local projects with the BBC and a branch of PBS. This summer, students in the Film Reel Alaska Mentoring Experience (FRAME) training program will collaborate with local and national professionals to make a short film here in Alaska, working through all the steps of production, from screenplay to postproduction.

Maya strongly encourages students in the program to work with visiting film crews to gain valuable first-hand experience, and there’s a steady stream of calls at Maya’s desk from producers looking for crewmembers. Her hope is the film degree will allow Alaskans to take more control of how the state and its residents are portrayed in the media.

“Alaska has stories,” Maya explains, “and the world is interested in them. The state’s not going to stop being photogenic, but how do we become part of the storytelling process? Can we direct the stories to be representative of what Alaska really is?”

For more information about the UAF Film Program and this year’s FRAME project, visit www.uaf.edu/film/frame.
While a handful of U.S. universities offer graduate degrees in indigenous arts, UAF is the only one to feature an MFA that focuses entirely on the artistic traditions of Alaska Natives. Graduate students work closely with instructors to master a variety of media while immersing themselves in the cultural traditions of the Yup’ik, Inupiaq, Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Alutiiq and Aleut people. Assistant Professor Da-ka-xeen Mehner graduated from UAF in 2007 with an MFA in Native Art and now teaches in the program. An accomplished artist in his own right, Da-ka-xeen's work has been exhibited in New York, California, New Mexico and Alaska, and for his accomplishments he was awarded a Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Award and Artist Fellowship. When asked about the Native Art program, Da-ka-xeen stresses the importance of considering the relationship between art and culture. “Today everybody lives in a fairly modern society, and even if they live out in rural communities they’re connected to a contemporary culture through the Internet and television. Everybody belongs to a culture. I see the Native Art program as art in a cultural context. It’s something beyond just the artist.”

Every piece of art created in the Native Art program represents a fusion of Alaska Native traditions and the artist’s own heritage. Native tools such as the adze and crooked knife are used to construct a variety of artifacts, including masks, ladles, and bentwood boxes.

Erin Gingrich, an undergraduate enrolled in the Native Art studio, describes the carving process. “It’s really interesting. You have to analyze the wood, making sure you’re going right with the grain so it’ll support the object you’re creating. It’s a completely different process from the rest of the studios here.”

Erin points out that every Alaska Native culture practiced woodworking, and even those that prospered without timber collected driftwood. For her, carving is an appropriate introduction to Alaska Native cultures. She lays out a series of wooden masks she’s been working on, each carefully carved in a traditional Alaska Native style but decorated with strings of beads. Beading, she explains, is a staple craft among the women in her family.

“The studio allows for many different materials to be used,” she explains. “But the different cultural perspectives really add to the experience. Every student brings their own culture to the workshop.”

For more information visit www.uaf.edu/art/areas/native-arts.
Reaching Out to Rural Alaska

The UAF Linguistics Department received a $1.9 million grant aimed at improving the language education of Alaska Native children. The grant will fund 20 master’s degree and four PhD students with an interest in applied linguistics to research education in Yup’ik and other Alaska Native languages, computer-assisted language education, and the preparation of teachers working in rural classrooms. To learn more about the Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) grant and the Linguistics Department, visit www.sites.google.com/a/alaska.edu/call/.

Ray Barnhardt: In his 43 years as a faculty member in cross-cultural studies, Ray Barnhardt has worked to improve the quality of education for rural and Native students across Alaska. His research, writing, and mentorship have profoundly improved the way educators in Alaska classrooms navigate cultural barriers to reach students. As a young man Ray taught math at an inner-city high school in Baltimore, Md., an experience which helped spark his interest in cross-cultural studies.

“It was obvious that schooling wasn’t really serving the needs of those students. There were all kinds of problems. After a couple of years of trying to deal with that, I decided there was more going on than I understood. I needed to get myself up to speed.”

While still teaching, Ray enrolled in a master’s program in education foundations at Johns Hopkins University and then went on to receive his PhD in anthropology and educational administration from the University of Oregon. After graduating, he applied for the position of assistant professor of education at UAF. With a Native population suffering from limited educational opportunities and a shortage of qualified teachers, Alaska would present many challenges for Ray.

“There’s historically been very little connection between what students, Alaska Native students in particular, experience in their community compared to what’s expected of them in the school. One of our challenges has been to find ways to get more Alaska Native people into the classroom as teachers, and to provide cultural preparation for teachers coming from somewhere else to help them speed up their ability to make education meaningful.”

The Frontier Romance

When you sit down to talk with Professor Emeritus Judy Kleinfeld, you quickly register the warmth of her personality and sense that although she has a vast reservoir of education and wisdom, she’s earnestly listening to you. In her 40 years of teaching sociology and research methods at UAF, Judy shared this profound engagement with thousands of students, making her one of the longest serving and most fondly-remembered of CLA’s faculty.

As a scholar of education and psychology Judy’s research has been people oriented, revealing a fascination with the way we live our lives and a great concern for improving overall well-being. Her research into cross-cultural education set new paths for teachers trying to bridge culture and language barriers in the classroom. In 1992 she founded the Northern Studies Program, dedicated to the multidisciplinary study of the circumpolar North, and more recently she started the Boys Project, an
Make Education Meaningful

In his early years at UAF, Ray played a key role in the state’s first distance education program, which provided teacher training to rural communities in Alaska. He also founded a cultural-orientation program, which takes educators from outside Alaska to traditional fish camps to allow them to experience life from a Native perspective. Ray was instrumental in the establishment of the Indigenous Studies PhD program here at UAF. With his late friend and colleague Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, Ray co-edited two collections of essays on education and cross-cultural studies, Alaska Native Education and Sharing our Pathways. “Oscar and I were characterized by our friends as Oscar-the-Dreamer and Ray-the-Schemer. He was a major influence on me personally and professionally, and on cross-cultural studies and Native education generally.”

After more than four decades with the university, Ray retired in May and was named Professor of Cross-Cultural Studies, Emeritus, but he confesses a desire to continue teaching in some form. He hopes that people reflecting on his work here will regard him as someone who didn’t waste the time he was given to affect positive change in rural Alaskan education. “I’ve been very fortunate to have had opportunities to work with really amazing people and to make a contribution to the processes that prepare Alaska Native educators and help people from the communities address issues through their own lenses. I’ve tried to run enough interference to give them the room and support to do that.”

For more information about this program visit: www.uaf.edu/cxcs/.

international group of researchers and educators concerned with the growing deficit in male educational achievement.

Though she no longer teaches, Judy still finds time to enrich others’ understanding through her writing. She authors a newspaper column on psychological issues of interest to the general public. In her most recent book, The Frontier Romance, published by the UA Press in 2012, she examines the relationship between the frontier and the quintessential American values of freedom, independence, self-reliance and courage. Judy’s next book, tentatively titled Alaska’s Hidden People, will act as a field guide to help visitors find the authentic Alaska they may miss as tourists to the state. Given her contributions to local and national education and her rigorous commitment to scholarly research, Judy emerges as an authentic member of the Alaska community in her own right and a shining star in the College of Liberal Arts.