

PITAAAS

Preparing
Indigenous Teachers
and Administrators for
Alaska Schools

University of Alaska
Southeast

2013-14
Annual Report



PITAAS Team



Ronalda Cadiente Brown
PITAAS Director

Principal Co-Investigators

Deborah Lo
Dean, School of Education

Joseph Nelson
*Vice Provost, Student Enrollment
and Services*

Kolene James
*Coordinator, Native and Rural
Student Center*

Annie Calkins
External Evaluator

Advisory Board

Deborah Lo
Edward Thomas
Rick Caulfield
Jeffrey Loftus
Alberta Jones
Kolene James
Joe Nelson
Marie Olson
David Katzeek
Annie Calkins
Cathy Thomas
Rhonda Hickok
Phyllis Carlson
Martha Stackhouse

The PITAAS program

at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) at the University of Alaska Southeast is much the same today as it was in the beginning, in 2000. The enduring goal has been to provide motivation, inspiration and incentives to Alaska Native students, particularly in Southeast Alaska, to enter the field of teaching. We celebrate the unique indigenous cultures of Alaska and hold the belief that well-trained Alaska Native educators can make a huge, positive difference in Alaska Native student success in our K - 12 public schools. With funding from the Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP) of the U.S. Department of Education, the PITAAS program is now well established statewide, and in step with the School of Education degree programs at all levels. It is also a good fit within the UAS Strategic Plan whose Core Theme and Objective is Student Success, by providing academic support and student services that facilitate student access and completion of educational goals.



The current grant goals for the PITAAS program reflect the UAS commitment to Native student success:

- ▶ Work with program partners to build on, expand and refine PITAAS recruitment, marketing and outreach efforts on a statewide level.
- ▶ Mentor Alaska Native teacher candidates to provide culturally relevant instruction to improve Alaska K - 12 schools.
- ▶ Support Alaska Native students whose goals are to become teachers in Alaska schools, to acquire strong academic skills and rich indigenous knowledge that will support the learning of K - 12 students.
- ▶ Provide financial aid and culturally relevant academic support for up to 40 Alaska Native juniors, seniors and graduate students enrolled at UAS.
- ▶ Continue to strengthen and refine the alignment of UAS teacher/administrator education curriculum with the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Teachers and Schools.

In the last three years PITAAS has grown in strength and scope as it serves Native students from all across Alaska. This annual report highlights some of the PITAAS activities and accomplishments of the last year.

Scholarships for Alaska Native students is at the heart of the PITAAS initiative.

During Year Three, 31 PITAAS scholarships were awarded to students in fall 2013 and spring 2014 semesters. **The average GPA of PITAAS students was 3.50**, continuing the upward academic spiral from the beginning of the grant cycle in 2011 when it was 3.06. **The average GPA over the three year grant cycle was 3.3.**



Nemasia Moala, her husband Barry (and daughter Zion) graduate with Bachelor's degrees, May, 2014

Sixteen PITAAS students graduated in May (11) and August (6) of 2014. The degrees included six undergraduate degrees (Bachelors of Liberal Arts, Science, and one Associates degree) and ten graduate degrees (Education Leadership, Elementary and Secondary Master of Arts in Teaching, Reading, and Educational Technology).

Of the 21 new UA Scholars enrolled in Year Three, 4 (18%) were Alaska Native. This is a higher percentage than general UAS enrollment data, which showed that in fall 2013 13% of new students enrolled were Alaska Native, and 10.5% of new freshmen were Alaska Native.

The PITAAS program has changed the face of UAS—17% of students are now Alaska Native. PITAAS has become an integral part of what UAS is all about, it is clearly aligned with the UAS mission.

— Chancellor John Pugh,
January, 2014

The UAS mission highlights the importance of partnering with the indigenous peoples of Southeast Alaska—the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. By working together, we can fulfill the vision of our forefathers for our people to get quality education and training that supports healthy families and sustainable communities.

— Edward K Thomas,
former President of
Central Council Indian
Tribes of Alaska and
PITAAS Advisory
Committee member

Transforming the Culture at UAS

Faculty Seminars

A formal partnership between the Sealaska Heritage Institute, UAS and the Juneau School District was signed, which focuses on deepening the understanding of indigenous knowledge of University faculty and K-12 teachers in Juneau. Two seminars hosted by SHI for UAS faculty from the School of Education, in a series entitled “Our Cultural Landscape” were held in Year Three, and were highly effective according to evaluations and anecdotal accounts. Cadiente Brown reported a stronger, positive relationship with the Sealaska Heritage Institute staff and directors, in part due to the formal partnership and collaboration on designing these cultural seminars.

August 23: Perspectives on Education, included presentations and discussion of Alaska Native perspectives, historical court cases and the state’s Culturally Responsive Standards.



Sealaska Heritage Institute President Rosita Worl presenting the history of the biannual Celebration event.

Comments around the Guide to Cultural Standards were interesting and I must say a rubric is a wonderful place to start great discussion. The Standards are not simplistic by any means.

Culturally responsive behavior is a complex topic and understanding of Culturally Responsive practice varies widely. I enjoy participating in on-going conversations as my understanding continues to expand.

I learned quite a bit about the education system in Alaska. Seeing and listening to teachers engage about culture and policy was quite interesting – there is so much to consider.

I will link the Dr. Soboleff video on my course sites and use as a seed for in-class discussions.

April 9: History and Meaning of Celebration featured lectures on the history and protocols of this important bi-annual cultural event by Dr. Rosita Kaahani Worl, President of Sealaska Heritage Institute and David Katzeek, SHI’s first President.

“There is a noticeable increase in the understanding and involvement of SOE faculty in Native cultural issues and identity of students, largely due to the PITAAS-Sealaska Cultural Landscape Seminar series.”

All handouts, lesson plans and supporting materials from each session are provided in binders (hard copy and digital) for each faculty member so that they can be used as resources in various courses. A DVD of Year Three sessions was produced and disseminated to interested UAS staff.

Native and Rural Student Center

Throughout Year Three, a series of activities and events was hosted by the Native and Rural Student Center to support and engage Native students and involve Native and non-Native staff.

The mission of the NRSC is to create a student-centered inclusive environment that honors diversity, celebrates cultural traditions and knowledge, and enhances the learning experiences of UAS students. A number of PITAAS students were frequent visitors to the Center – “... a great place to be around, with supportive and kind people, and to attend culture related activities.”

The Center was remodeled in spring, to create more space and light. PITAAS students engaged in Center activities such as a Native film series, an Elizabeth Peratrovich Day celebration to honor Alaska’s famed civil rights leader, and the 12th annual Native Oratory Contest, which now includes Native high school students. Three PITAAS students took away prizes in the competition.



UAS and PITAAS students and supporters testified in favor of the Alaska Native languages bill, which passed in the Alaska Legislature.





Developing Leaders

In the Fall 2013 Semester 12 PITAAS students were enrolled in the Native Educational Leadership course. Eleven students were enrolled in the Spring semester.

The course objectives for this one credit weekly seminar were to:

- ▶ Strengthen the PITAAS cohort;
- ▶ Increase awareness of issues facing Native students and educators;
- ▶ Develop an understanding of their own relationship to the history of education in Alaska;
- ▶ Incorporate Native knowledge into their college experience

In this course students read articles about and discussed Alaska Native education, Native Ways of Knowing, Alaska's Cultural Standards, and how the ASSETS framework applies to educational settings. They examined characteristics of organizational leadership and ways in which leadership supports the health, education and success of Alaska Native children and youth, and their families in Alaska's public schools.



Undergraduate Students at UAS

Spotlight on PITAAS and Student Success

Since its inception PITAAS has kept a sharp focus on developing student success in college.

In Year Three an online survey was sent to the 14 PITAAS students who had successfully graduated in the last two years, to get their feedback on university coursework and supports. Their reflections and ideas for improvement will help guide program activities in the future. Ten of the graduates (71%) completed the survey, which included numerical ratings and narrative comments such as the ones below.

A total of 10 graduates (71%) completed the twelve question survey that included numerical ratings as well as narrative responses.

Five PITAAS graduates earned Masters of Educational Leadership, two earned Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program and three had obtained Bachelors degrees.

60% rated their overall experience at UAS as EXCELLENT; 40% rated it Very Good.

100% of these graduates would highly recommend the PITAAS program.

Here are a few of the survey comments:

- ▶ I am happily employed as a direct result of these courses and have potential for future employment as a principal.
- ▶ The program prepared me to become an effective educational leader.
- ▶ The education courses were among the best ever - they were relevant, applicable immediately. I built a strong support group for later.
- ▶ The academic rigor was challenging, there were high expectations, but none were above our qualifications. We were given support to reach our goals but not coddled.

- ▶ The program set us up to meet the demands of the field.
- ▶ Besides getting a scholarship, PITAAS gave me a support network and made me feel more connected to the university.
- ▶ I highly recommend any and every Alaskan Native pursuing an education career to take advantage of a highly effective program such as PITAAS.

In addition, interviews with the UAS Chancellor, Provost, Dean of Education, Vice Chancellor of Management and Student Affairs and the AKLAN Director in January, 2014 revealed strong support for the program and its impact on UAS.

“There are many ways to demonstrate success that PITAAS can attest to, including contributions to the state (eg. PITAAS student serving on the Board of Regents), and impacts on local districts (eg. PITAAS graduates becoming the only Native language and culture teachers in rural schools) “There is a noticeable increase in the understanding and involvement of School of Education faculty in Native cultural issues and Native identity of students.”

They also had a array recommendations for improving the program. “Further integrate Native Language courses, so that more students are minimally conversant in a Native language.” “Pull together former PITAAS graduates—now teachers/administrators— in an annual Forum or Symposium, to share best practices, inspire current and future PITAAS students and ‘pick their brains’ about program improvements, with an eye toward increasing student success and motivation.”

These ideas helped fuel development of a new grant proposal, and will be part of continual conversations about Native student success at the highest level of UAS management.



OUTREACH in and out of state

During Fall, 2013 and Spring, 2014, UAS Admissions staff and representatives traveled across Alaska to 24 towns and villages with large Alaska Native populations and presented to students from Bethel, Craig, Cordova, Fairbanks, Galena, Thorne Bay, Klawock, Hydaburg, Scammon Bay, Juneau, Kake, Kipnuk, Klawock, Klukwan, Metlakatla, Anchorage, Wasilla, Palmer, Nenana, Pilot Station, Kodiak, Seward, Sitka (Mt. Edgecumbe High School) and Yakutat. One important aspect of these trips was to develop relationships within communities between families and UAS and to talk with UA scholars.

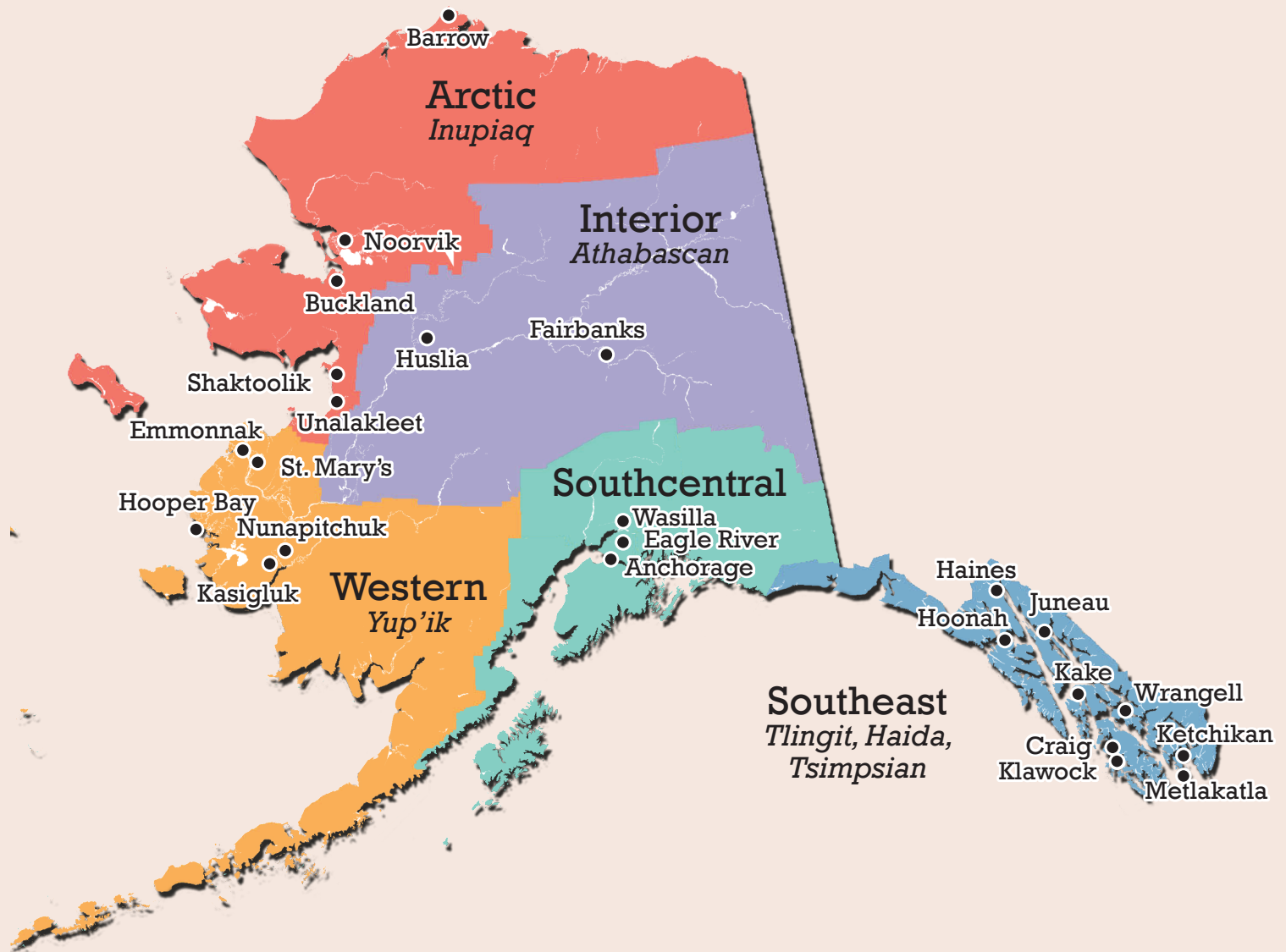
Two PITAAS Advisory Board members represent the interest of schools and districts beyond Southeast Alaska also assisted in spreading the word about the program's positive impacts over the last decade.

As a dedicated scholarship program for post-secondary education PITAAS is a unique grantee within the Alaska Native Education Program. The PITAAS Director has regular opportunities to share program goals, activities and outcomes with diverse audiences at statewide and national conferences and meetings. In Year Three she participated and/or presented at the Alaska Bilingual, Multicultural and Equity Conference, Special Education, 2nd Annual Alaska Native Studies Conference, and the National Conference on Race and Equity in Higher Education.

PITAAS student Mary Shales at graduation ceremony, May, 2014

2013-14

Map of Home Communities of PITAAS Students



PITAAS Student Snapshots: Impacts on the Educational Landscape of Alaska

Crystal Alstrom hired to teach in St. Mary School District immediately after graduation. “I lived in rural Alaska and left rural Alaska to pursue a higher education degree but still found a way to return to my hometown” Crystal had background/training in engineering, which is a highly valuable resource in rural Alaska and was hired with a provisional certificate to teach secondary math. That experience motivated her to change careers, and with the support of PITAAS she was accepted into the MAT program, which she finished in record time. Crystal’s love and commitment to her village, Yup’ik culture and a subsistence lifestyle sustain her as a teacher and involved community member.

PITAAS graduates **Barbara Cadiente Nelson** (2002), Brenda Edwards (2012) and Rhonda Hickok (2005) are now three of the Juneau School District administrative team, each working to ensure multiple opportunities for Native students in the District to succeed. Cadiente Nelson is also a Board Member of the Sealaska Corporation.

Andrea Durny, member of the Nulato Tribe of the Doyon Corporation in interior Alaska and mother to a new baby, earned her MAT degree in 2014 and is now a fully certified teacher in the Yukon Koyukuk School District. The District also hired Cassandra Weter who is currently teaching in Huslia.

Sonta Hamilton Roach, an elementary MAT graduate and now a teacher in her home village of Shagluk, in interior Alaska, was elected as one of 13 members of the Doyon Corporation Board of Directors in spring, 2013. With the corporate mission “to continually enhance our position as a financially strong Native corporation...” the Board is the steward of policy and practices that implement that mission.

Mary Shales began studies at UAS in 2002, and graduated in 2014, earning a certificate in Early Childhood Education and degrees in Elementary Education and Special Education (2014). During the journey Mary realized her lifelong teaching goal, surpassed

*Tlingit Elder and
PITAAS Advisory
Committee
member Marie
Olson visiting with
NRSC Coordinator
Kolene James*



all expectations and earned high grades. “I cherish the fact that I am in the classroom for Alaska Native students. They brighten my day and it brings me joy that they can approach me with ease. These are precious relationships and I look forward to serving Native students on a larger, much needed scale as a teacher, community member, and extended family member. We desperately need more Alaskan Native teachers in our schools. I see it and I feel it.”

Like Shales, **Joshua Jackson** of Juneau has been an avid PITAAS student over the years, earning a Bachelors in Education and then Master of Education degrees in both Reading(2011) and Math (2013), while teaching Kindergarten full-time at Harborview Elementary School and becoming a new father. Joshua is now part of a Tlingit language apprenticeship program developed by the Sealaska Heritage Institute, a strong PITAAS partner.

Shauna Scudero of Metlakatla got math fever while at UAS and after completing her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Ed (2008) went on to get a Master in Special Education and in Math Education. Shauna is a passionate upper elementary/middle school teacher, articulate PITAAS advocate, single parent, and strong fisherman.

Matthew Berlin from Buckland was awarded a PITAAS scholarship in 2013 to pursue a Masters in Education Administration, the next career goal for this committed teacher. Berlin earned his BA in Elementary Education, (minoring in Yup'ik) from UAF and then taught for six years, during which he was involved with the Rose Urban-Rural Exchange program and taught Yup'ik and Inupiat Eskimo Dancing. “I will incorporate my knowledge of Alaska and its Native cultures into my practice and establish positive rapport with my students by learning about their cultures, practices, interests, and families.”

LATE BREAKING NEWS: PITAAS GRANT RE-FUNDED

The University of Alaska Southeast was notified in early September that their proposal for the preparation and advancement of Native teacher education was again funded by the Alaska Native Education Program of the U.S. Department of Education. This new grant, *the 6th successive PITAAS grant awarded to UAS over the last fourteen years*, includes exciting possibilities:

- ▶ UAS is partnering with Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) to design and produce a media campaign on the importance of a career in education.
- ▶ Alaska Native teachers will have the opportunity to earn an endorsement in Distance Education and E-learning to extend the reach of Alaska Native teachers and cultural experts.
- ▶ UAS will design a new endorsement program in Alaska Native Education and Leadership.
- ▶ Competitive PITAAS scholarship funds will be available to Alaska Native students who wish to obtain more knowledge of their language and culture.
- ▶ Seminars like the “Our Cultural Landscape” series will be open to the public.
- ▶ 60 Alaska Native high school students will have the chance to take tech prepped courses in Introductory Education, Math and/or English courses through AKLN resulting in preparation for College and the PRAXIS I exam.

YOU can support the PITAAS program.

Your contribution toward the PITAAS Program and mission is welcome. Donations may be made in support of PITAAS Program Support to the University of Alaska Foundation PITAAS Endowment Fund (20413). Thank you! Gunalcheesh to Avant Garde for their contribution in establishing the PITAAS Endowment Fund

PITAAS



UAS UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
SOUTHEAST
learn • engage • change

FOR MORE INFORMATION
about the PITAAS program please contact:

Ronalda Cadiente Brown,
PITAAS Director, University of Alaska Southeast
11120 Glacier Highway • Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 796-6058 • rcadientebrown@uas.alaska.edu

PITAAS is funded by an Alaska Native Education grant
from the United States Department of Education: CFDA#84.356A

