
SEAS Newsletter - September 2025, Issue 10



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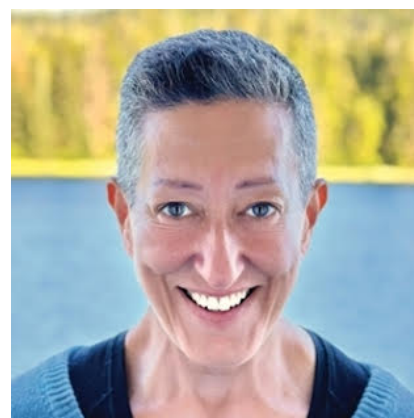
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Dear Friends of UAS Arts and Sciences,

Welcome to another fall at the University of Alaska Southeast! This season is always full of energy... students returning to campus, the crispness in the air, the feeling that something new is beginning.

There is so much ahead to be excited about!

We are now in the third year of implementing our A&S Strategic Plan, which means it's time for a mid-cycle review. This is a perfect moment to reflect on our progress, celebrate what's working, and recalibrate our goals. Because I was so closely involved in the university-wide planning process, I'm in a unique position to help ensure that our school's goals align with the larger institutional vision. That connection will help us stay focused and strategic as we move forward.



Carin Silkaitis
Dean of Arts & Sciences

I am also continuing to serve as UAS's Accreditation Lead as we prepare for our spring 2026 NWCCU site visit. That work gives me a broader perspective across the institution and affirms how central the School of Arts and Sciences is to UAS's mission.

Our fall Campus Kickoff was so lovely this year. I had the joy of meeting many of our new and returning students, and it's always fun to see a robust number of people on campus... talking, laughing, and connecting. That energy matters. It reminds us that higher education is a human endeavor, and that being physically present for one another can make a real difference. To our faculty and staff: thank you for the work you do every day. Your presence physically on campus helps build the welcoming, lively environment our students deserve.

I also want to extend a special invitation to our community partners, alumni, and friends. This year's Evening at Egan lecture series offers a rich mix of ideas, research, and storytelling, and we'd love to see you there. These public events are designed to bring us together to celebrate lifelong learning and to make our campus a gathering place for our community.

Whether your passion is biology, creative writing, political science, marine policy, or any of the dozens of disciplines housed within our school, thank you. Your work matters deeply, and it is a joy to do this work alongside you.

Here's to a season of connection and purpose.

Warmly,

Carin D. Silkaitis

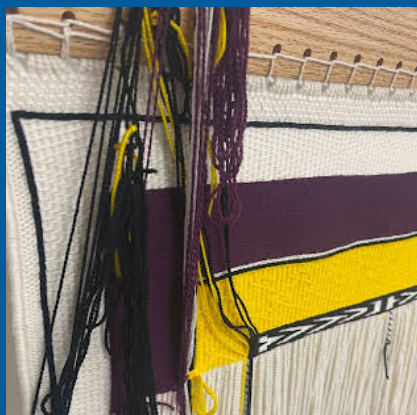
Dean of Arts & Sciences



Evening at Egan: Vu Pham

On September 19 at 7pm, UAS Arts & Sciences will welcome [Vu Pham](#) to [Evening at Egan](#) to screen and discuss his new film and first documentary, [Sea Rose Ashes](#). Sparked by a period of self-reflection and insight while living in Juneau at the start of COVID, *Sea Rose Ashes* is a story of Vu's mother, a refugee who fled Vietnam with Vu when he was a boy. Murdered by a fellow refugee who had once been like family, the documentary explores how her death impacted Vu's experiences of memory, identity, and trauma. To process this formative tribulation of his life, Vu traveled back to Vietnam in 2024 with his mother's ashes - his first time back since fleeing in 1981 - to reconnect with family living there, repatriate his mother's remains to their hometown cemetery, and speak aloud the words he wished to say to his mother's murderer.

Vu is now training to be a [surrogate victim](#), helping to develop a program in his home of Portland to facilitate victim-offender dialogue panels. This aspect of restorative justice will allow him to connect with convicts, law enforcement, corrections officials, and more to foster a space of mutual



UAS Community Robe

The first warps of the UAS Community Robe were measured and cut by students in the summer of 2024; weaving instructor Rae Mills has since facilitated work done by many students to bring life to the robe with each new row. First envisioned by Lily Hope and championed by Dean Silkaitis, the UAS Community Robe provides an opportunity for weaving students to contribute to a major undertaking - as weaving any robe is certain to be - with the goal of having a complete Yéil Koowú (Ravenstail) robe that can be worn and danced by UAS students and members of the UAS community in times of celebration and ceremony.

A slight departure from the traditional black, white, and yellow often seen in Yéil Koowú, the robe also incorporates purple to encompass the four colors of the nonbinary pride flag. Several individuals involved in the creation of the robe, including Rae themselves, identify on the nonbinary spectrum and have found a welcoming space in the creation of the robe. Plans for accompanying regalia pieces will expand the project and allow newer weavers experience with the materials and patterns of the robe.



UAS Dive Course Certifies AAUS Divers

Nathan Lang, a Marine Biology major, and Taylor Saulsbury, an Environmental Science major, entered their junior year as the first students to complete Juneau's new [Scientific Diving course](#). Requested by students seeking accessible and applicable diving experience, the course provides the opportunity for students to become [AAUS](#) certified divers. Differing from industrial or recreational diving, scientific diving's aim is to advance science and to preserve and protect the aquatic environment. This often involves difficult dive environments, including night dives, to explore and study ecosystems that are otherwise inaccessible. Nathan shared that, while the intensive course was incredibly taxing, it was "absolutely worth it for the diving experience and the people you meet."

Taught by [Dr. Mike Navarro](#), Juneau's dive program adds a third UA dive location, joining [UAF's Kasitsna Bay Laboratory](#) and [UAS Sitka's dive semester](#). Offering a Juneau-based course supports students unable to leave Juneau, and provides pertinent and practical preparatory dive experience for

understanding. Bridges are created through advocacy and discussions of *Sea Rose Ashes*, which Vu hopes will continue to promote uplifting rehabilitation by affecting hearts and minds in a discourse for responsibility, truthfulness, and a transcendental mode of recovery for those similarly affected by violence.

Lily Hope shared that, "Weaving a large ceremonial piece collaboratively is a good start to returning to each other, to holistic wellness in ourselves and our communities. The work, when complete, will continue rippling positivity toward all who contributed their hands and hearts, and to all witnesses and future wearers of this historic dancing blanket. I'm excited to see the smaller regalia items birthed from inspiration of this work."

students who choose to then engage in other UA dive programs. While UA has had a dive program for over 25 years, the addition of Juneau's scientific diving course creates opportunities for students to garner hands-on experience that can be applied to fisheries science, geological study, archaeology, and more in the state with more coastline than the rest of the nation combined.

Associate Dean's Corner

Congratulations to the faculty who completed the From Surviving to Thriving New Faculty Learning Community in AY25! This year-long program offered peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, and candid conversations about the "hidden curriculum" of higher education, helping new colleagues strengthen their teaching, scholarship, and sense of community at UAS, as well as a "write-in-place" chance to work on research, scholarship, creative activity or other projects.



In AY '26, the FLC kicked off on Thursday, September 4th. You are still welcome to join us (CELT's own Ramona Broussard will co-lead) if you are in your first five years at UAS in a full-time faculty position. Our next meeting is: Thursday, September 18th, from 12-1pm in the Whitehead Conference Room or Zoom.

Completed the Learning Community (8+ sessions):

- Corrine Marks, School of Education
- Jay Szczepanski, Humanities
- Robyn Capp, School of Education
- Xiaofei Song, Humanities
- Judith Daxootsu Ramos, Humanities
- Megan Behnke, Natural Sciences
- Jason Kuhn, Natural Sciences

We also celebrate those who joined us for one or more sessions, contributing their voices and experiences to the community:

- Forest Haven, Social Sciences
- Éedaa Heather Burge, Humanities
- Hekia Bodwitch, Social Sciences
- Nguyet Nguyen, Social Sciences
- Trevor Fritz, School of Career Education
- Taylor Rose, Ketchikan, Social Sciences
- Wendy K'ah Skáahluwaa Todd, Natural Sciences

Together, this group embodies the spirit of “thriving”—supporting one another, learning collaboratively, and shaping the future of UAS.



Student Spotlight: Garrett Smithberg

In his second year at UAS, Garrett Smithberg has experienced UAS as both a student and employee, and continues into the 2025 Fall Semester with a foot in both worlds. As an English major with a sub-emphasis in Literature and the Environment, Garrett enjoys a creative outlet through poetry, and appreciates the artistry of the written word—from his typewriter and the direct intentionality it lends to his writing, to his collection of fine press, letterpress-printed books to better appreciate the attention to craft in what truly makes a “book”, a book.

A Juneau resident of twenty years, Garrett has paired his English degree pathway with his pursuit of an Indigenous Language Speaking Certificate in Lingít Yoo X̱'atángi, following closely behind his fiancé—Neilgáa Koogéi Taija Revels—who garnered her certificate last Spring. This chosen pathway dovetails well not only with Garrett's passion for linguistic minutiae, but also for the sound of the spoken word—which, as Garrett believes, coupled together allow for a more attuned immersion in culture through the exploration of the inner meanings of language.

After obtaining his degree, he hopes to be able to apply his experiences toward the genre of environmental writing and criticism, while continuing to observe and remain attuned on ideas for poems that seek to synthesize his fierce passion for place, the endless wonder of the natural world, and to speak on the moments of stillness which have become increasingly rare in the cacophony of the modern era.

As an employee at UAS, Garrett has worked with UAS Facilities, UAS Egan Library, and now as a student employee with the School of Arts & Sciences, where he assists and supports Staff with various projects and administrative work in the Dean's Suite of Soboleff



Faculty Spotlight: Logan Berner

Growing up in Juneau and Gustavus, [Dr. Logan Berner](#) has a lifetime of experience in and around temperate rainforest ecosystems. This early interest fueled his educational journey, from his own days as an undergrad student at UAS pursuing a B.S. in Environmental Science, to his M.S. in Environmental Science at WWU, and his Ph.D. in Forest Ecology at OSU. Interwoven with research, Logan's education and field work took him around the Pacific Northwest, Russia, Finland, and Canada.

Returning to UAS, now as an Assistant Professor of Forest Ecology, Logan shares his classrooms with former professors turned colleagues, and students eager to learn from his years of experience as an academic nomad. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and a renewed appreciation for Southeast that grew during his adventures abroad. Returning with new eyes, he's reliving the region's grandeur in a way similar to out-of-state students enjoying it with fresh eyes.

Logan's specialty in forest and Arctic ecosystems, and the effects of climate change on those ecosystems, was reflected in his first course taught at UAS as a then affiliate professor: Arctic Terrestrial Ecosystems and Climate Change. Learn more about Logan's research and how climate change is affecting Arctic ecosystems at his upcoming [Evening at Egan](#) presentation: Arctic Ecosystems in a Warming World, in the Egan library at 7pm on November 10.

Looking to the future, Logan hopes to capitalize on the mosaic of ecosystems within our reach in Juneau and Southeast: temperate rainforests, alpine, muskegs, and more. One area of scientifically relevant and actionable study that interests him is the humble blueberry, particularly delving into where, why, and when harvests

Building. Alongside his work as a student and employee at UAS, Garrett spends his time with his fiancé picking up more books at Friends of the Library, gardening, tinkering & fixing things around the house, berry picking, attending regular practice sessions and performances with the Eagle Raven Dancers (where his fiancé is also co-leader), admiring the subtle changes which come and go with the seasons, and preparing their newly purchased home for their continued life together, and that of their incoming child.

are notably good or bad. On this interest, Logan shares that, “blueberries are important for food security in rural communities, but regional resource managers perceive that blueberries are becoming less abundant and more variable from year to year. Research is needed to better understand blueberry abundance and the potential effects of climate change on this resource.”

Outside of teaching and research, Logan engages with the ecosystem through foraging, fishing for (and catching) salmon, spending time with his dog, reading, and jiu jitsu.

Explore Upcoming Events on [UAS Connect](#)



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