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Serving the coastal environments, cultures, economies, and communities of Alaska

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Dear Friends of UAS Arts and Sciences,

As I write to you today, campus is abuzz with energy. The sun is shining over a snow-covered Auke Lake, students are walking on the frozen water, making designs in the snow, and enjoying the beauty of our campus. The School of Arts & Sciences has been busy working with faculty, staff, and students on a strategic planning process that will identify the shared values and themes that will carry A&S through the next five years.



Carin Silkaitis
Dean of Arts & Sciences

I'm so excited to see this process unfold, and to once again be reminded how passionate and committed our faculty and staff are to providing our students a high-quality education and supporting them in all their educational endeavors. As a Dean, I am committed to excellence and innovation, to inclusion, equity, and a sense of belonging for everyone here in A&S.

As I mentioned in my first newsletter, one of my goals for the future is to connect with as many alumni as possible. I want to celebrate your successes, learn from your experiences, and remind you that UAS is always your home away from home. On each conference trip, I want to devote time to connecting with alumni in that region. Here in Alaska, I hope to have small, informal events to get to know you. Please feel free to reach out to me if you'd like to connect! I look forward to learning more about your time here in the Arts & Sciences.

We hope you read these stories and celebrate alongside us. Happy Holidays and we'll see you in the spring!

Warmly,
Carin Silkaitis



Professor X'unei Lance Twitchell Nominated for an Emmy - We would like to congratulate Professor X'unei Lance Twitchell for his Emmy nomination for his writing work on *Molly of Denali*! This nomination, as well as the other nominations *Molly of Denali* received, are part of the first annual Children & Family Emmy Awards, recognizing the increasingly valuable contributions to the world of children's television programming in recent years. Not only is *Molly of Denali* the first nationally-distributed children's show to feature an Alaska Native lead character, but it benefits from the passionate work and contributions of Alaska Native creatives, such as X'unei.

[X'unei Emmy Nomination - Learn More](#)



New ABIS Building Updates - The Auke Bay Integrated Science Building is currently under construction. It will be a 12,000 square foot, two-level teaching and laboratory building. It is taking the place of the 60-year-old lab and three out-buildings by the Anderson Building on Auke Bay. The ABISB has a smaller footprint, allowing students to better enjoy the natural surroundings of the Auke Bay waterfront. The final beam in the supporting steel structure was placed this fall, after being signed by students, staff, and members of the construction crew, following in the tradition among ironworkers.

[ABIS Building - Learn More](#)



Community Partnerships: Perseverance Theater - UAS revived its partnership with Perseverance Theater early this year. UAS and Perseverance Theater's partnership first began and has been sustained through the Connie Boochever Endowment for Arts, established through a generous gift from Judge Robert Boochever in honor of his late wife. A supporter and participant in the theater community, Dean Carin Silkaitis was enthusiastic to bring back this partnership, providing the opportunity for UAS students to engage in the theatre community. This past year, students, faculty, and staff have been able to attend showings of The Brothers Paranormal, Fun Home, and Where the Summit Meets the Stars.

[Connie Boochever Endowment for Arts - Learn More](#)

Student Spotlight - Charlotte Springer

Charlotte is a UAS undergraduate student who recently participated in the Alaska Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence retreat held in Talkeetna, Alaska in September. She was honored for her research talk, titled, "Development of Methods for Heavy Metal Analysis and Ageing of Armhook Squid for an Emerging Alaska Fishery". Her presentation won "Best Undergraduate Research Talk", and she was awarded \$500 to accompany that honor.

Charlotte has worked in Professor Michael Navarro's lab since January of this year. Her award highlights her research efforts to further develop methods on armhook squid, which is a species of interest to fishermen as a possible new fishery. The methods that Charlotte is working on are vital for fisheries science to understand how productive this potential fishery is as well as how healthy it is to eat.

Along her journey, Charlotte has also strengthened partnerships with Richard Yamada, a local fisherman and International Halibut Fishery Commissioner, and Dr. Lisa Hoferkamp, an expert in the study of chemical processes in the natural environment, such as heavy metals. In preparation for their meeting, Charlotte displayed great initiative and fearlessness. She requested to give a talk of her own volition and stepped in front of prominent scientists from all across Alaska, as well as some from Nevada and New Mexico. Her talk was excellent and informative. Congratulations, Charlotte!



Faculty Spotlight - Heidi Pearson

When COVID shutdowns began in 2020, Dr. Heidi Pearson and other scientists worked together to make the most of the opportunity. With greatly reduced tourism and a lack of cruise ships in the waters surrounding Juneau, the team set out to study humpback whales in a unique environment.

With the reduced water vessel activity, the team hypothesized that cortisol, the



stress hormone, would be reduced in humpback whales, compared to typical years with regular tourism and whale watching. They also predicted that more whales would visit Juneau, and that whales would stay for longer periods of time. Small darts fired at the whales were used to collect blubber samples to measure stress hormones. Photographs were taken of humpback whale flukes, or tails, to identify individual whales and determine residency rates.

The team collected baseline data during 2020 and 2021, years of reduced vessel traffic near Juneau. During 2022, the resumption of a full Juneau cruise ship schedule, and associated whale-watching trips, afforded the team the opportunity to study whales during a more normal summer. Analysis of the data is currently underway. Unfortunately, it's not as simple as comparing the raw numbers: stress hormones and residency patterns can be affected by a number of factors, including prey availability. If food is scarce or abundant, cortisol levels and residency patterns may be affected. So all factors must be taken into consideration to determine the baseline levels of the humpback whales in the absence of whale watching tours and other heavy marine traffic.

Dr. Pearson's work has already been reported on and discussed by numerous papers and agencies, including [NOAA](#) - a partner in the research project, [BBC News](#), [The Guardian](#), and the [New York Times](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 9, 8:00 pm - Snow Ball semi-formal dance (REC Center)
- December 23 - January 2 - Winter Break (campus closed)
- January 16 - Alaska Civil Rights Day (campus closed)
- January 17 - Spring semester classes begin
- March 13 - 17 - Spring break

Submit research, project, or event information



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