

SEMESTERS

NEWS AND SUPPORT FOR ALASKA'S EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS

UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
SOUTHEAST
ALASKA COLLEGE
OF EDUCATION

Greetings from the UAS Alaska College of Education



IN THIS NEWSLETTER...

- ◇ Message from the Executive Dean
- ◇ AKCOE Semesters Features: Robyn Capp
- ◇ AKCOE Program Updates
- ◇ AKCOE Receives National Accreditation
- ◇ PITAAS Updates
- ◇ Learning by Scientific Design
- ◇ New Faculty

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DEAN ATWATER

Since March when the coronavirus pandemic began to impact our college's activity, we have been on a rollercoaster-type journey with a series of highs and lows. As we begin the new semester, we are guardedly hoping that the lows will begin to fade...[see more](#)



AKCOE RECEIVES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION (CAEP)



On May 15th, 2020 the Alaska College of Education at UAS received notice from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) that the college has received accreditation at the initial licensure level as well as the advanced level through Spring 2025... [see more](#)

AKCOE SEMESTERS Features: Robyn Capp

Robyn Capp graduated from University of Alaska Southeast with a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education in 2019 as the program's Outstanding Graduate.

TEACHER INFO: Robyn Capp

SCHOOL DITRICT: Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

GRANT TITLE: COVID-19 Rapid Response

GRANT FUNDING AGENCY: National Education Association (NEA) Foundation

AMOUNT: \$5,000

GRANT PROGRAM GOAL:

To support educator-led initiatives that increase educational equity and opportunity in response to student needs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

Ms. Capp will use the funds from the NEA Foundation's COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant to create

flexible learning kits for the students in her classroom at Randy Smith Middle School.

The kits will be developed for the 2020-2021 school year and will be aligned with Alaska's Smart Start 2020. The kits will transition with students between the risk levels.

This will allow students to have access to familiar materials both in the classroom and at home. Each flexible learning kit will include core instructional material and hands on activities. In addition, each kit will also be individualized based on each student's IEP goals, objectives and specific family needs.



Welcome to the first issue of "Semesters", a bi-annual newsletter provided by the UAS AKCOE. While this first issue is being provided via email, please subscribe to our social media to receive all future updates and issues. If you have any questions, please contact us at 907-796-6050. Thank you!

Find UAS and the [Alaska College of Education](#) on Social Media!



Message From the Dean



Since March when the coronavirus pandemic began to impact our college's activity, we have been on a rollercoaster-type journey with a series of highs and lows. As we begin the new semester, we are guardedly hoping that the lows will begin to fade. In spite of all the COVID-related disruptions, our students, faculty and staff are to be commended for persevering through all the uncertainty. I offer thanks to all the school districts that have helped us navigate the new terrain of virtual clinical activity and to the host teachers who have been so accommodating to our interns. In reflection, it is amazing that the clinical transition last spring from face-to-face to virtual went as well as it did. With a summer for K-12 and us to plan, we are confident that our candidates' clinical experience this fall will be better. Although much of our recent attention has been spent on reacting to the pandemic, I will use the rest of this space to report on our improvements and what we are looking forward to in the coming year.

Now that we have secured full CAEP accreditation, the College is taking the time to holistically review its foundation and to take steps to make our programs more interdependent. We took the first step in this process last January when we identified our core beliefs that we agreed should be reflected in all of our programs. This exercise provided us with a good opportunity to shift our attention from many of the operational components tied to accreditation to those that serve as the basis of our programs. We agreed on four beliefs: equity and diversity, community, reflection and inquiry and Yaakoosge'. Yaakoosge' is a Tlingit word that refers to intelligence. The root word ge' is the act of questioning, to wonder, to problem solve with yaa- the face of and koo, the mind or intelligence. The choice of this Tlingit word to capture these components of learning was to recognize the unit's emphasis on preparing teachers to work with Alaska Native students. We strongly believe that all our candidates must have a good understanding of the limitations of Western education on our state's Indigenous students and on how to use the understanding of the students to avoid repeating these limitations. We are now critically reviewing our programs through the lens of each of the beliefs and as necessary, making adjustments to course content to ensure that the four are properly addressed.

Looking ahead to the coming year, I am pleased to share that through the Deans for Impact organization, our college is a part of a national network of EPPs that is focused on Learning by Scientific Design. Our special education faculty and Associate Dean Christian will be the College's team. A description of this work is below. The increasing dependence by K-12 on online instruction has the College placing more emphasis on preparing teachers how to effectively teach in this medium. We are pleased that several of our faculty members are well versed in this area, enabling us to make necessary improvements. Finally, our ties with Educators Rising Alaska will be strengthened by the K-12 chapters utilizing our dual enrollment Introduction to Education course.

Six months ago, we were warily watching the Covid virus begin to impact our lives. Now, with the fireweed topping-out and the semester about to begin, we find ourselves fully in the throes of the pandemic. The good news is that our innovative responses to the Covid disruption have allowed us to move forward while recognizing the uncertainty of what will follow. Despite all of this, we are certain that our students will continue to have the personal learning experience and the good relationships with their peers, faculty and staff that make our programs so successful.



Executive Dean Steve Atwater, Ph.D

Program Updates



Scott Christian
Secondary Program Coordinator

Secondary Programs Scott Christian, Ph.D

The AKCOE Secondary programs are thriving this year, with the largest enrollment in several years. This fall there will be 9 candidates serving in certified teaching positions through initial licensure by program enrollment, while they are completing their Master of Arts in Teaching degrees. Another 28 candidates serving in 11 school districts across the state will participate in a full year, full time internship while taking online courses. This intensive licensure program can be completed in one year. For more than 30 years, the secondary program required participation in a six week summer session on the Juneau campus. Because of Covid-19, this summer the session was offered virtually. This delivery model proved to be very effective and engaging for candidates. The summer session in 2021 will also be fully online. Stay tuned!

For more, check out the [Secondary Program Page](#)



Mary Wegner
Ed Leadership Coordinator

Educational Leadership Mary Wegner, Ph.D

We are celebrating the success of our 1st virtual Educational Leadership Summer Session. Typically held in person, the Summer Session sets the foundation for the learning that happens throughout the year, and this summer COVID-19 necessitated that the classes and relationship-building move virtual. Congratulations to faculty members Jerry Schoenberger and Kim Hanisch and the 18 students in this year's Masters in Educational Leadership cohort for leaning into the virtual space so successfully. The future of Alaska's public education system is especially bright considering the cohort composition found in this year's Educational Leadership and Superintendent Endorsement programs!

For more, check out the [Educational Leadership](#) and [Superintendent Program Pages](#)

Special Education Program Susan Andrews, M.Ed

The BA special education program has been updated to reflect multiple options for meeting the AK Native Graduation Credit. EDSE has created a course dedicated to learning American Sign Language and is open to all interested persons spring 2021. We hope to make this a regular offering. Faculty are in the process of developing two new courses. One will support student engagement focused on trauma-informed practices, Universal Design for Learning, Functional Behavior Supports, and current practice. The other course will be on understanding special education for the Alaskan Context focused on historical influences, bilingual supports, and disability issues. These courses will be incorporated in the BA special education program and offered as electives to students in graduate programs.

For more, check out the [Special Education Program Page](#)



Susan Andrews
Special Education Program Coordinator

BA Elementary Education Program Jeffrey Lofthus, Ph.D

We are excited to welcome and work with our host teachers serving as mentors for our student teachers in the following communities for the 2020-2021 school year: King Cove, Kodiak, Homer, Soldotna, Palmer, Wasilla, Anchorage, Girdwood and Juneau. We've offered our entire degree online since 2005 and will continue doing so in order to best serve the needs of students, communities, schools and districts throughout Alaska. Despite the challenges faced by our host teachers, student teachers and our AKCOE staff and faculty due to COVID-19, we will continue to adjust as needed to best meet the needs of Alaska's K-12 students and their families.

For more, check out the [Elementary Education Program Page](#)



Jeffrey Lofthus
Elementary Education Program Coordinator



Lisa Richardson
Reading Specialist Program Coordinator

Reading Specialist Program Lisa Richardson, Ph.D

Candidates in the Reading Specialist M.Ed. program had a busy summer. For this year's literacy practicum, candidates worked virtually across twelve communities, with forty K-8 students to support engagement in reading and writing experiences. Using close observation and an assortment of data collection tools, candidates tailored their instruction to support each student's engagement, motivation, literate identity, and proficiency over the course of three weeks. These K-8 students left the experience with increased confidence, texts they could continue to read on their own, and authentic purposes for writing. Candidates will continue their work in the fall, as they continue to apply these ideas to meet the needs of the students they work with in each of their classrooms, whether that space is virtual or in person.

For more, check out the [Reading Specialist Program Page](#)



Beth Hartley
MAT Elementary Program Coordinator

MAT Elementary Education Beth Hartley, Ph.D

Welcome back to our 20-21 academic year! Our MAT Graduate Elementary programs are in full swing. We continue to offer three ways to get an Alaskan teaching certificate: a Masters of Teaching (MAT) that includes the Graduate Certificate for K-8 teaching, the K-8 Graduate Certificate (alone), and, for interested certificated teachers, our K-8 Endorsement. This year is going to require exceptional creativity and flexibility as well as a commitment to personal safety as we prepare our Candidates to work in classroom situations ranging from fully virtual to completely in person. Our instructors are optimistic as we move forward and are anticipating a year full of growth and learning for all of us.

For more, check out the [Elementary Education Program Page](#)

AKCOE Receives National Accreditation (CAEP)

On May 15th, 2020 the Alaska College of Education at UAS received notice from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) that the college had renewed its accreditation at the initial licensure level as well as the advanced level through Spring 2025. AKCOE met the rigorous national standards in the areas of preparation that include: (1) content and pedagogical knowledge, (2) clinical partnerships and practice, (3) candidate quality, recruitment, and selectivity, (4) program impact and (5) Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement. This effort is the culmination of an intensive collaborative effort involving faculty, staff, administration as well PK-12 stakeholders and partners across the state. The next site visit will take place in Fall 2024.



PITAAS Program

What do three students from Unalakleet, Chignik Lagoon, and Juneau have in common? Each received a PITAAS scholarship through the University of Alaska Southeast and completed their degree or endorsement requirements in summer 2020. These graduates in Educational Leadership and Superintendent Endorsement join a group of scholars who received a scholarship through the PITAAS Program and are employed as an educator in an Alaska school district.

The Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska Schools (PITAAS) strives to increase the number of Alaska Native educators by offering a generous scholarship to eligible students who seek a degree in the field of education. The PITAAS scholarship is unique to the University of Alaska Southeast and available through a partnership with Alaska Native organization Sealaska Heritage Institute and a federal grant through the U.S. Department of Education (S356A170013). Eligible students must be accepted to an AKCOE degree program, complete a PITAAS application, and meet all requirements.



For more information please contact the [PITAAS Program](#).

LEARNING BY SCIENTIFIC DESIGN

One of the more exciting developments for the College this year is our special education faculty joining the national Learning by Scientific Design Network. The Network, sponsored by Deans for Impact, will work to reimagine and redesign the arc of teacher-candidate experiences so that candidates are prepared with a scientific understanding of how students learn. During the 3-year commitment to the network, our special education faculty and Associate Dean Christian will deepen their understanding of learning science and then use this knowledge to review the College's special education programs. As appropriate, the team will then make program modifications. The Network includes five teams from across the country including a team from the UAF School of Education. The teams will share their work with each other on how best to help their teacher candidates gain a good understanding of learning science principles.

NEW FACULTY & STAFF INTRODUCTIONS



Dr. Mary Wegner's work focuses on transforming the learning landscape to be relevant for today's students and providing equity in education. Mary has served as Superintendent in Sitka Schools and held educational leadership positions in Sitka and Anchorage. Mary started her career 35 years ago as a special education teacher.

Mischa Plunkett Jackson, Chookangee Tláa, is Tlingit (Shangukeidí Clan) and has family connections to Juneau, Haines/Klukwan, and Kake. Prior to joining the Secondary MAT program she was a social studies teacher in Juneau and worked with local Alaska Native organizations. Mischa is an advocate for culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogy, student engagement, tech integration and equity.



Dr. Gary Leiter and his wife live in Soldotna where he has taught as an adjunct math and writing instructor at UAA for 10 years. Dr. Leiter was also a secondary math teacher for 27 years. These experiences have given him the current opportunity to teach at UAS with STEM students seeking their MAT degrees.

David Song's passion for student advocacy brought him to Juneau, where he served as a fellow for the Association of Alaska School Boards. In that capacity, he assisted with youth engagement initiatives in Southeast Alaska and legislative research. He has previously worked as a science educator in the Boston Public School system and as an education policy consultant for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. David originally hails from Baltimore, Maryland, and will be working as a Recruiter for the Alaska College of Education and UA. He enjoys baking, the occasional hike, and watching Gavel to Gavel during the legislative session.

