Poker Flat Research Range launched a four-stage rocket Feb. 6 that successfully completed its 16-minute flight through an auroral substorm before splashing down in the Arctic Ocean. All four of the onboard instruments executed their jobs as planned. VISIONS, short for “VISualizing Ion Outflow via Neutral atom imaging during a Substorm,” is a NASA mission aimed to understand how the aurora heats and affects oxygen in the upper atmosphere. The launch was the first to be covered in real time by social media and on the Internet. Constant updates allowed people worldwide to follow the sounding rocket’s launch.

Staff from the Geophysical Institute helped 20 middle school teachers from across the state explore the world of ice and snow in a three-day professional development workshop. The workshop provided the teachers with activities, lesson ideas and materials about the Earth’s cryosphere that can be incorporated into their classrooms. Workshop attendees spent time at the GI, the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory Permafrost Tunnel in Fox, and the grounds at Chena Hot Springs Resort.

Natives for Positive Change hosted an Elizabeth Peratrovich Day celebration on the Fairbanks campus Feb. 16. The program at Hess Rec Center featured participation by community groups and schools, performances by UAF’s Inu-Yupiaq and Troth Yeddha’ dance groups, and a dinner honoring Alaska Native elders. Students founded Natives for Positive Change in 2011 to promote healthy communities and mentor Alaska Native youth in academic and professional development.

The Cooperative Extension Service in March hosted the ninth annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Fairbanks. Workshops and sessions covered topics such as sustainable farming methods, constructing rainwater catchment and irrigation systems, agritourism, and ways to farm or garden more sustainably in Alaska.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names officially recognized Troth Yeddha as the name for the ridge that is home to the Fairbanks campus. In Lower Tanana Athabascan this name means “Indian potato ridge,” and refers to the plant with an edible root — Hedysarum alpinum — that is a traditional food for Native people throughout Alaska.

Engineering students Pat Brandon, on the ladder on the right, and Andy Chamberlain, on the ground, and volunteers from GHEMM Company stabilize the top piece of the 2013 ice arch as it is placed in Cornerstone Plaza on the Fairbanks campus. Students this year built the structure out of pykrete, a mixture of ice and sawdust, which is eight to 10 times stronger than concrete.

Summer construction projects will affect roads, parking lots and pedestrian walkways across the Fairbanks campus. The three big projects in the campus core include the Wood Center dining facility expansion, the Fine Arts vapor barrier project and construction of the new engineering building. A number of summer events that normally take place in the campus core have been relocated. Tanana Loop from the west end of Bunnell to Duckering will be closed for two years beginning April 1. As Murie Building construction wraps up this spring, the big project on West Ridge starting in June will be work around the outside of the Butrovich Building.

UAF’s 91st commencement will take place at the Carlson Center in Fairbanks Sunday, May 12. UAF alumnus and Olympic medalist Matt Emmons will be the commencement speaker. Preliminary numbers from the Office of Admissions and the Registrar indicate the possibility of a record number of doctoral degrees being awarded this year.

Summer Sessions 2013 kicks off with a concert by Judy Collins on May 5 in Davis Concert Hall. In addition to more than 200 academic courses, summer offerings include a Family Culture Night lecture series on Mondays; members of UAF’s international community focus on aspects of growing up in a different culture. On Tuesdays a Healthy Living lecture series, co-sponsored by Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and CES, will cover topics ranging from understanding health insurance to nutrition strategies for a long, healthy life. On Thursdays 10 free concerts are scheduled in the Georgeson Botanical Garden.
The Nanooks bested the UAA Seawolves 3-1 to sweep the season series and claim their fourth straight Alaska Airlines Governor’s Cup March 2. The Nanooks won the cup for the 12th time in the tournament’s 20-year history. Photo courtesy of Jason Coulquhoun.

Photos, clockwise from left

The 40th Festival of Native Arts featured performances by dance groups from all over the state, including the UAF Inu-Yupiaq dance group, with Baxter Bond, center. Photo by J.R. Ancheta.

The Nanook was on hand at the Fairbanks International Airport to welcome Joy, the 727 jet recently donated by FedEx to UAF’s aviation program.

Engineering major Ryan Cudo rings the cowbell after setting the pace with a climb up the ice wall next to the Student Recreation Center in 20 seconds during a fun competition March 1.

Students try out the biggest jump on UAF’s new terrain park, which opened in February on the Fairbanks campus.