

Peter Van Flein
June 23, 2020

Dear Fellow Alumni and Friends of the University,

For the past five years I have served on the UAF Alumni Association board, including as its president for the last three years. Quite a lot has occurred in that time and I would like to take this opportunity to update the community on our accomplishments.

At the beginning of my tenure, the UAFAA board and executive director worked together to update the organization's strategic plan, its bylaws and a new Memorandum of Agreement with then-Chancellor Brian Rogers to better outline our relationship with the university. We created new board member job descriptions and moved our voting process online, significantly lowering the cost to the organization and increasing participation.

We have also encouraged university leaders to shape the annual Blue and Gold Gala into a more UAF-focused event and to leverage the gathering to raise funds for the university. We streamlined our awards to include two annual recognitions, the Distinguished Alumnus Award and the William R. Cashen Service Award. We changed the date of the Nanook Rendezvous alumni reunion to align with the community's Golden Days celebration in the summer. And we launched an online engagement platform called Nanook Network where alumni can find classmates, mentor students and make professional contacts.

We are current on all our tax filings thanks to Wilson & Wilson CPA. Our investment accounts are now being very professionally managed by the team at Keyes and Associates. Both firms are UAF alumni-owned and -operated. We have a new Executive Director, Theresa Bakker, who is finishing her second year leading the Alumni Association. We have also hired an alumni relations coordinator, Elizabeth Talbot '18, and two student assistants, Cameron Blood and Millard Arnold. There was a time where the association did not have any staff. That was a long year!

The UAF Alumni Association has grown. With that growth comes an aspiration to make a significant impact on improving student life on campus and elsewhere. We also aim to make meaningful gifts to forward the mission of the university. To that end, we have made a series of major gifts to significant projects, including the Troth Yeddha' Indigenous Studies Center, and have committed to an ongoing sponsorship of the One Health, One Future initiative. These are projects that will certainly make UAF a global hub for indigenous study and knowledge in the circumpolar north.

Recently the alumni association board voted to sponsor the university's new eSports program with a gift to help build the eSports Center to be located in the Wood Center. ESports is big and is only going to get bigger. We envision UAF's center as the flagship facility in Alaska. It will bring people together and bring youth to campus to participate. This will be the first exposure for some middle and high school students to the university, resulting in more enrollment from Alaskan students.

Thanks to a large charitable bequest from James Pruitt '73, we were able to make a gift in the fall of 2019 to establish the UAF Student Support fund, which is overseen by the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities through the UAF Resilience Project. The timing could not have been more fortuitous as the fund was highlighted at the 2020 Blue and Gold Celebration in February 2020 where more than \$150,000 was raised. In the interim, the Student Support fund has helped many students adjust to the challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. James Pruitt's charitable gift will continue to provide benefits to the students, the university and the UAF Alumni Association.

I would like to thank those who have given to the UAFAA Benefactor Fund and look forward to your continued support in the future. If you have not given before, the association is doing great things on campus and I would encourage you to start giving. Please consider a charitable bequest to the association and/or the university. You can reach out to the alumni office and they will get you in touch with the responsible development officer.

This past year, the alumni association held its winter meeting in Juneau during the legislative session as part of our annual UA Impact legislative fly in. We have met with most of our legislators, the governor and the UA team in Juneau. We invited UAA and UAS to include several alumni to participate with us. This coordination of effort in support of UA has proven powerful. Thank you to alum Mathew Carrick '17 for supporting us through coordination of our visits to Juneau in recent years.

While not an Alumni Association project, I am happy to have the new combined heat and power plant up and running. It will power the university into the future. Other projects that are still on the table and are of interest to me: the university's underfunded scholarships, the funds the association is holding for a Veteran's Memorial, a new strategic plan for the alumni association and a project to restore and conserve the alumni totem pole at the UA Museum of the North.

As for me, I have recently been promoted to grandfather and my wife Erika has retired after almost 30 years working for the university. This has given me pause to evaluate my next set of adventures. Considering that, I am stepping away from the UAFAA board having thoroughly enjoyed my time getting to know the university on a whole new level. I will miss working with my fellow board members and the university staff, although we will not be distant as the University of Alaska Fairbanks is my family.

Our new board president is Cindy Wright '88. I look forward to her wise guidance and stewardship in taking UAFAA forward. Our alumni association is in good hands.

Sincerely,

Peter Van Flein