

Reaching Goals Through Common Pursuits and Support (CPS)
A Proposal by GI, IARC, and ACEP
March 2020

Background

The success of UAF as a world-leading Arctic research university draws on autonomous institutes as incubators of innovative research - sustained by highly effective research administrative support capacity at the unit level. The value of this model lies in the ability of research units to pursue research and knowledge production in ways that are appropriate for the broad range of tasks and goals at hand. Through testing and refinement of different tactics at the unit level, the most efficient and successful approaches emerge. These may then be adopted by other units on campus, resulting in an adaptive ecosystem of research and research support activities across the university. Five years of major reductions in state funding support have eroded some of this adaptive capacity at UAF and furthermore threaten to diminish research success in both scientific and financial terms.

The shared research support services framework described in this document is part of an alliance that aims to reach broader *Goals Through Common Pursuits and Support (CPS)*. Alliance partners are mindful of the fact that indiscriminate implementation of centralized services can do irreparable damage to UAF's Arctic science leadership and harm UAF's broader mission. Potential disruption of UAF's productive and – up to now – resilient research ecosystem is a serious threat. Thus, administrative consolidation or shared-services efforts proven successful at the level of a single or small number of units cannot simply be scaled up without consideration of the type and scope of research they are meant to support. Experience at UAF with successful and failed efforts has shown that support structures need to be responsive to the specific needs of individual researchers, larger teams, and entire units. At the same time, these structures can help ensure that the university administrative apparatus meets such needs, stays fiscally robust, and remains in regulatory compliance.

This proposal seeks to achieve two interrelated aims: (i) development of a research alliance that strengthens and enhances cross-campus collaboration in strategic areas recognized as central to UAF's mission, and (ii) implementation of a research support services framework that is responsive to research needs, increases efficiency without threatening capacity, and can engage more effectively with central administration on process improvement.

Strategic research goals and CPS

The value of strategic coordination and development of a broader, campus-wide research strategy has been recognized across the university. Such coordination could help prioritize research support and activities across campus, reduce internal competition and increase success rates in pursuing extramural funding, foster development of larger-scale research efforts that tap into funding sources not accessible to individual researchers or small teams. It would also send a stronger message to funders and other potential partners on university priorities and strengths. The VCR and VPR have hosted a number of conversations in recent years to explore and potentially define strategic focal areas for research. However, the breadth, diversity, and complexity of research at the university make this a challenging task and hence no progress has been made beyond recognition of core areas of strengths. The latter include research themes centered on Energy, Climate & Environment, Security & Hazards, and Health.

Here, we propose an alliance between GI, IARC, and ACEP that centers on three of these four core themes: Climate & Environment, Energy, Security & Hazards (Fig. 1). The alliance would be implemented in a manner and at a scale that is appropriate for development of joint research strategies, identifying synergies, and implementing a cooperative research support framework that serves all partners. The alliance model is associated with the least amount of risk and disruption and allows for fully reversible implementation of new administrative and research support structures as needed. In particular, an alliance preserves the autonomy and stature of the three partner units, all of whom have built individual brands that translate directly into leverage and research funding acquisition key to UAF's

continued success. Also, the alliance would not seek to be exclusive in terms of research collaboration, but simply enhance existing capacity.

While we anticipate increases in efficiency and modest savings, along with enhanced research support capacity, a key aim of the strategic research alliance is to create a foundation for the joint development of broader, more substantive research initiatives. Details will have to be determined as the model evolves. For example, we may want to identify senior personnel at ACEP, IARC, GI that can serve as agency liaisons and help develop a more robust research portfolio that addresses key priorities and includes larger collaborative efforts. Such efforts would not seek to exclude other UAF partners but aim to identify and strengthen synergies between the three alliance partners. This would include more effective sharing of science support functions (e.g., GIS, remote sensing, science communication, etc.) across the three units. As an example of this approach, the proposed CSP alliance has both the capacity and scientific expertise to serve as the home of the DOE Arctic Energy Office that is currently under discussion (see Fig. 1). We envision other major collaborative efforts coming to fruition through engagement with DOD, DOE, and other domestic and international partners. Such efforts would result in significant increases in research revenue streams. However, they require dedicated project coordination support for acquisition and execution, hence the request for 1 FTE for project coordination as part of this initiative.

The research support functions under CPS would be distributed based on the respective units' strengths. For example, with broad travel support needs that include international and domestic travel and support for rural, non-UAF affiliated travelers, IARC would take the lead on travel-related services. The CPS framework would also create a mechanism to contribute to refinement or redesign of UAF policies and procedures that have proven ineffective or counterproductive when applied consistently across several units.

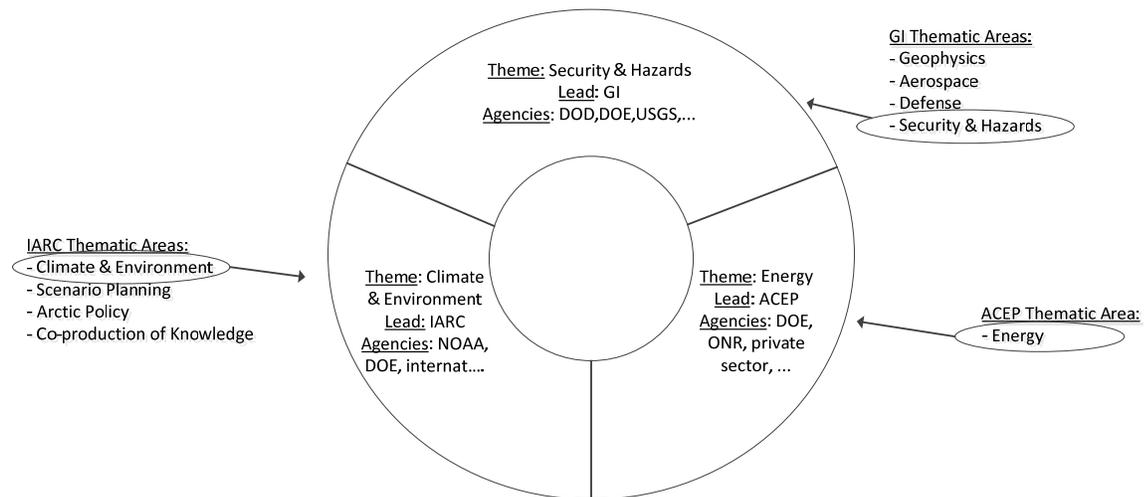


Fig. 1: Thematic foci and structure of research alliance. Each partner leads a specific theme and identifies agency liaisons. Individual partners also have responsibility for specific shared research support functions detailed further below in this document.

Partners collaborate on larger strategic research initiatives, guided by an Alliance Steering Group, consisting of senior research unit leadership

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Funding Code
 GI
 IARC
 ACEP

Phase-in Period: March thru June, 2020

