

2023 Arctic Encounter Symposium Address

March 30, 2023 | President Pat Pitney

Arctic Encounter Symposium

Thank you, Lt. Governor Dahlstrom, and good afternoon.

As President of UA, I'm honored to lead the only public university system situated in America's Arctic. It's a privilege to address you. Congratulations, Rachel, Jackson, and the rest of the Arctic Encounter team for the success of this event.

Alaska, and by extension the University of Alaska, occupies a critical position at the international crossroads of the Arctic. Here, logistics and transportation, remote energy production, and national security converge with indigenous heritage, sustainability, and climate change.

The University of Alaska recognizes the significance of this position. We continue to support and sponsor Arctic Encounter because we firmly believe that solutions to Arctic challenges require collaboration and cooperation.

And I'm proud to say: **the extraordinary research and leadership that we provide in the Arctic throughout the University of Alaska System has a global impact on addressing those challenges.**

Arctic emphasis is embedded in most of our programs across the system.

At the University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research, we are quantifying the costs of adaptation and mitigation as our climate shifts. It's crucial information for policymakers to understand the ramifications of their decisions.

The University of Alaska Southeast is uniquely situated: in a rainforest, with a glacier off the back deck, the Pacific Ocean out the front door, and a freshwater lake next door. Our students see and study the immediate, nuanced shifts in ecosystems. Their recent research suggests melting glacier run-off may actually help support resilient salmon runs.

UAS is *the* most beautiful university for students to study sensitive environments.

Our flagship Arctic Research University, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, is the nation's leader in Arctic research, and among the top in the world.



From impacts of permafrost thaw, unmanned aircraft monitoring Arctic infrastructure, fisheries and ocean sciences, complete with the nation's only ice-capable research vessel, to robust climate change modeling...all are embedded with indigenous knowledge and respect for the communities we serve.

UAF is a global destination for cutting-edge Arctic research.

I would also like to acknowledge just a few of the people who showcase our Arctic research expertise. They did their training here, and are now branching out, sharing their wisdom, and making a difference nationally and globally.

We're proud to have Alaskans in these roles as leading voices, and we're proud UA was part of their formation.

There's Larry Hinzman, former UAF Vice Chancellor for Research and engineering professor. He's now serving in the White House as the Executive Director of the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee.

Fulbright Scholar Erin Whitney and her former team at the Alaska Center for Energy and Power played a pivotal role gathering data that will inform industrial-scale power generation, transmission, and transportation. She's now the Director of the Arctic Energy Office at the U.S. Department of Energy.

And as a long-time friend and colleague, I want to acknowledge Mike Sfraga. He earned his Ph.D. from UAF, and we served side by side for many years. In his more formative days, Mike climbed Denali, and authored a book about Bradford Washburn the man responsible for the defining photography of that mountain.

Now, Mike is undertaking another climb, this time to the heights of Arctic diplomacy as he prepares for his confirmation hearings as our nation's first Arctic ambassador. I can't think of a better person for the job.

Mike, last year, you introduced us to the Arctic's 7 Cs. I'd like to add an 8th – a C for congratulations... from all of us.



To systematically develop future leaders like Mike, Larry, Erin, and many others, we have kicked off the planning process for UA's Arctic Leadership Program.

If you're on that external steering committee would you please stand? Thank you so much. UA's Arctic Leadership Program will give students and early-career professionals the foundation they need to become leaders and influencers, building and strengthening their national and global networks.

It will catalyze the training and inquiry of that next generation of Arctic Leaders. And I know we'll see the participants from this program filling our seats at symposiums like this after we all have stepped aside.

If you are or ever were a student, staff, or faculty member at any of our three universities UAA, UAF, or UAS, would you please stand? Thank you! As you can see, there are many UA experts in the Arctic space who will be central to developing our future leaders.

As an added advantage, our students and faculty have been building networks across the Arctic for over 20 years through UArctic. UArctic is a global consortium of over 200 circumpolar north Universities and research institutes. They are all focused on improving our collective Arctic future. I'm pleased to be on the UArctic board and appreciate ISER's Diane Hirshberg for her leadership role in that organization.

I want us to intentionally build leaders who are Arctic-prepared. Whether they be engineers, policymakers, climate scientists, mayors, governors, indigenous leaders, White House Staff - or the future Arctic ambassador. They'll all have a depth of Arctic understanding and a network to influence Alaska's global future.

The University of Alaska System is proud to be at the forefront of Arctic issues. We have extraordinary Arctic programs. We live in it, we research it, and we teach it every day. If someone wants to study the Arctic, work in the Arctic, or research the Arctic... UA's three universities are where it's at.

We are honored to be part of the global Arctic community, and look forward to continued partnerships and collaborations across the region.

Thank you.