

# EPSCoR SES Cohort Takes Flight

Alaska EPSCoR is looking toward the future.

In collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Program of the UAF Graduate School, EPSCoR is supporting a seven-person “peer group” of Ph.D students focused on social-ecological systems. The study of SES – systems with interacting and interdependent biophysical and social components – is a central focus of Alaska EPSCoR, and the idea behind the program is to provide training and education to a cohort of professionals who can take the lead in future Alaskan SES research.

“It takes midcareer professionals in the field and it gives them degrees and leadership training so that they can stay in the state and advance the state,” said UAF Education faculty John Monahan, who is coordinating the program.

Monahan said the peer group is based on a pair of similar programs he had coordinated at the UAF School of Education, and is designed to keep students focused and on track during the graduate program. “What we attempted to create was the sense of a community group, so that people assisted one another in completing the program.”

Alaska EPSCoR is not providing tuition for peer group students, but rather playing a coordinating

role. EPSCoR funds an annual face-to-face meeting for all the students as well as guest speakers, travel grants, and other support. In addition, in fall 2013 EPSCoR offered a two-week workshop to help guide interested students in putting together graduate school applications.

Peer group members hail from a number of different places, but activities are based out of UAF. The creation of the group spurred the UAF graduate school to create the specific courses needed for the degree, including two credits of research methodology and one credit of seminar each semester. Monahan said the peer group support is being offered through the close of the current EPSCoR award in mid-2017. He said the program is also serving as a model of sorts for similar endeavors.

“A model’s being designed that you could take and apply to a wide variety of disciplines,” Monahan explained. “To that extent they took this model and are trying to adapt it and create a cohort in Guam that is a collaborative effort between UAF and the University of Guam.”



Members of the EPSCoR SES peer group meet in Fairbanks in July 2014.