



# UAF news and information

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## Friday Focus: R1 - Building and capitalizing on momentum

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— By Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

The past two weeks I spent parts of my evenings following a personal creative pursuit – building a three-dimensional diorama to depict the story of the birth of Krishna, one of the many Hindu gods. I had a deep desire to re-create this scene and some plans on how to do it had been brewing in my head for a long time. However, I did not have all the steps worked out on how this ambitious project would be completed by the time I had planned to open my home to several students and community members in celebration of Krishna's birthday. As I started working on the project and asking around, many people stepped up to generously volunteer their time. They took the lead on different project elements, experimenting and innovating. Some ideas failed and new ones emerged, all amidst fun and laughter. The work gained momentum and volunteers took on even more agency. Together they created a [magnificent diorama](#) that surpassed all my expectations. And, the project wrapped up well before the guests arrived. By all measures, it was a great success.

Working on the project, I learned a valuable lesson. We can't always have a perfect blueprint of everything we want to create. Even with a well-laid-out plan, we need to adapt and innovate. Aspiration, purpose, planning, belief, commitment, agency, teamwork, adaptation, innovation – are all a part of the journey to success. At UAF we have also embarked on an aspirational journey to be an R1 University. R1 is a prestigious status denoting the highest level of research activity among U.S. doctoral-granting universities. I urge you to read and re-read the four-part R1 series by Chancellor White to learn about [what R1 is, how UAF can achieve R1, why R1 is important for UAF, and why UAF being R1 is important for Alaska](#). This series lays down the aspiration, purpose, planning, and work already in progress. His quote "The way we see ourselves is the position from which we lean into our future" resonates with me, and I echo it here.

Hundreds of faculty, staff and students have already begun working tirelessly on R1 planning. All across the university, work is underway to increase the recruitment, retention, and graduation of all our students, with a focus on doctoral students. A Process Improvement Team worked with the Admissions Office and Graduate School to move and modernize the graduate admissions process. Members or designees of the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and ASUAF – UAF's student government, are increasingly engaged not only in planning, but also in implementation of the R1 initiates. UAF established new degree programs, such as Masters and Ph.D. programs in Earth System Science, that better align with students' interest and industry needs. The State of Alaska saw the hard work, recognized the merit, and invested \$12.5 million to empower UAF to pursue the R1 aspiration.

This summer and fall, 84 doctoral students received one or more Troth Yeddha' Ph.D. fellowships. Earlier this week our Regents heard multiple student testimonies on how these fellowships are helping them with planned timely graduation. UAF has already built tremendous momentum in the R1 efforts. Now is the time for every UAF member and stakeholder to engage further, take agency, and capitalize on the momentum toward R1 success. If you are a Master's student who wishes to pursue a Ph.D. or would like to explore the value proposition of a Ph.D. degree, talk to your faculty mentor, department chair, dean, or the staff at the Graduate School. If you are a staff member who always wanted to pursue a Ph.D. but found the idea overwhelming, there are opportunities for pursuing your Ph.D. alongside peers in a supported cohort model. Again, talk to your dean/director or the Graduate School about the resources available to support your journey. If you are a current Ph.D. student facing a roadblock with writing your thesis, use the help available through the UAF Writing Center in the new Student Success Center on the 6th



UAF photo by Eric Engman

Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

floor of the Rasmuson Library. If you are a faculty member and notice that your student is not showing up or is struggling, reach out and let them know about the [Counseling Services](#) at the UAF Student Health and Counseling Center. Students who are struggling may need additional help for routine tasks such as scheduling their annual committee meeting and completing their paperwork. While working in partnership with the Counseling Center you can help the student get back on track. If you are a chair, dean, or director, please keep an oversight on the progress of every student. I will do the same. We are vested in the success of every student.

I am so proud of the work that has already been done and of the success stories emerging. Let's remember to celebrate these individual victories as we continue to build new momentum and capitalize on the momentum toward R1 success.

*Friday Focus is written by a different member of UAF's leadership team every week.*



#NanookNation

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