



UAF news and information

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UAF photo by JR Ancheta

Anupma Prakash is the UAF provost and executive vice chancellor.

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— Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

"Winter is a season of recovery and preparation." — Paul Theroux

It is December, and like every December I am counting down the days remaining for me to travel overseas to reconnect with my family. I left India in 1996 and moved to the Netherlands as a postdoctoral fellow. It did not take me long to adapt to the independent and relatively fast-paced life the western world had to offer. That pace picked up further when I moved to UAF as a tenure-track faculty in 2002. My days were packed: from bundling the children and dropping them off at day care in the morning to writing research proposals and publications in the quiet hours of the night. I got used to being on the proverbial roll.

My first winter trip back home was an eye-opener. It was the first time I saw my own country with a foreign eye. I felt like just in one year I had unlearned so many things that I grew up with. I remember being jittery when my family was not ready in time for a trip we had planned. Then I snapped when someone asked for another cup of tea before leaving when we were already late. I distinctly remember my father holding my hand and asking, "What is the matter?" That question echoed in my head until I calmed down. In a couple of days, I was back to my old self — embracing the familiar ways and rhythm, and celebrating being together with family and friends.

Ironically, wintertime in Alaska reminds me of home much more than summer does, and I believe it is because of the slower pace interspersed by festive celebrations. Alaska's long, cold, dark winter nights have the power and tranquility to naturally slow everyone down. The crisp dry snow on the ground, the bright stars, houses adorned with an excess of twinkle lights, and the occasional northern lights in the dark skies just bring about a special magic. For myself, I find it oddly therapeutic. It is my time for reflective thinking and making more meaningful connections.

Just last week, one of my fellow administrators said, "It is a slow time for me. Is there some project you want me to pick up this month?" And I responded — please don't. Slow is good. Just enjoy it and keep the routine operations rolling. The pace will pick up when we return from the winter break and you will need the energy. I would give the same advice to others around me.

There is beauty and merit in this changing pace of seasons and life. It allows you to run and then pause; cross off everything from the to-do list and then let the list build up again; spend more time on essentials and let go of the nonessentials; care more about things that matter and care less about things that are peripheral; enjoy the intense work period as well as enjoy the lethargic periods. I do pray that this winter break gives you the much-needed time to slow down, make meaningful connections, and re-energize your heart, soul, mind and body.

Happy holidays, friends!

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



#NanookNation

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