



UAF news and information

Friday Focus: A summer of planning

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Provost Anupma Prakash masks up to help keep Nanook Nation healthy. UAF photo by JR Ancheta.

— by Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

Two weeks into the fall semester, many of us are starting to get more accustomed to the new realities: a campus with less traffic, buildings with fewer employees, classrooms with dispersed students, labs with plexiglass, walls and floors plastered with safety stickers, and people wearing all styles of face coverings all the time.

For all of us, it has not been an easy journey to get to where we are this fall. We've all juggled many personal and professional responsibilities to make things work. I cannot claim that I know or understand what you've been going through. But I can share a part of my life with you. Thinking about the past four months, I feel like this was the longest and most unusual summer that I have spent in Alaska. As a member of the chancellor's [Core Cabinet](#), I was in the midst of planning and responding to needs, challenges and opportunities on a daily basis. I worked closely with selected members of the Faculty Senate, and with deans and directors and my staff throughout the summer.

Among other things, we worked on our [accreditation report](#), [enrollment management](#), supporting faculty to adapt course materials for distance delivery, standing up a [middle college](#) for high school students, launching five free online courses through [AlaskaX](#), finding creative ways to continue research and numerous summer outreach activities, creating new revenue streams, managing budgets, setting policies for safe operations during a global pandemic, and carefully planning for the safe delivery of over 2000 course sections in the fall! There is a lot to celebrate and a lot to reflect on.

No training, no reading and no prior experience could have aptly prepared any of us in higher academia for the conflated challenges that the current fiscal climate and COVID-19 pandemic continue to pose. As summer progressed, I found it easier to work through the logistics of class offerings, but I continued to be concerned about how students and employees were coping.

I could not stop thinking or stop worrying. I chanced upon Michael Jordan's quote that "If you can't stop thinking about it, don't stop working on it." I initially found that quite inspiring and continued on, but then I got to the point where I started losing sleep. It was then that I realized that this pandemic was a marathon, and I was approaching it as sprint races in quick successions. I am now actively focusing on setting the right pace for myself.

Again, looking at the fall semester, so much has changed around us, yet some things remain unchanged: the commitment of our faculty to provide accessible and best possible learning opportunities to our students with diverse needs; the dedication of our administrators and staff to ensure a smooth continuity of our operations despite all odds; the pledge of our students to invest in their future while keeping our campus safe; and the trust of our alums, community members and supporters who believe in what UAF stands for.

Witnessing colleagues contributing tirelessly to move our university forward during these challenging times is truly humbling and inspiring. It fortifies my own confidence, pride and joy in being a part of the Nanook Nation. I want you to know that you are my strength, and I am very grateful that I have an opportunity to serve you in my role as UAF's provost and executive vice chancellor.