

Greater research cooperation and increased collaboration

University of the Arctic

The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, research institutes and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North. UArctic builds and strengthens collective resources and collaborative infrastructure that enables member institutions to serve their constituents and their regions. Through cooperation in education, research and outreach, it enhances human capacity in the North, promotes viable communities and sustainable economies, and forges global partnerships.

UArctic's vision is "An Empowered North – With Shared Voices" underlining that all northerners must have a say in their own future and that of the region as a whole. Its mission to "Empower the people of the Circumpolar North by providing unique educational and research opportunities through collaboration within a powerful network of members" reinforces that aim. UArctic works in partnership with indigenous peoples, recognizing their integral role in northern education, training, knowledge generation and transfer, and seeks to engage their perspectives and participation in all of its activities.

As a membership organization, UArctic is fully controlled by member institutions. Its work serves those members and aims to increase cooperation and synergies across the network. The network's organization and operations models are geared towards maximizing value and impact for members, students and the region. UArctic members gain value through their participation in the organization. UArctic represents its members' interests internationally by promoting their diverse and shared capacity to serve northern communities and interests.

UArctic was an initiative born out of the context of the Arctic Council who asked

the Circumpolar Universities Association to conduct a feasibility study. That plan was then endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the eight Arctic countries through the Iqaluit Declaration in 1998, declaring that they "welcome, and are pleased to announce, the establishment of a University of the Arctic, a university without walls..." UArctic was launched as a network organization in 2001 with an International Secretariat in Finland.

In 2015 planning began in earnest for the first ever UArctic Congress, held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in September 2016 with themes taken from the International Conference on Arctic Research Planning process. The 2016 Congress was the first time that all UArctic bodies – Rectors' Forum, Board of Governors, Council and Thematic Networks – met together in the same location. This was also the first time the governance bodies met together with scientists in a major scientific conference. With over 400 participants, the first UArctic Congress clearly demonstrated the need for a scientific interdisciplinary conference on Arctic themes.

In response to increased interest from its members for greater research cooperation within the network, UArctic has developed new tools and initiatives to better serve members and individual researchers. One such example is the new Research Infrastructure Catalogue – an online database of members' infrastructures and facilities. Additionally, the Research Analytics Task Force works to better track members' collective research outputs.

UArctic's Student Ambassador Program is a select group of student leaders who represent UArctic and their home institutions, and promote the network and its activities. The growing number of UArctic Student Ambassadors is one of the many initiatives



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/RYERSONCLARK

where UArctic strives to create an active alumni organization that allows for current and former students to be engaged in UArctic.

UArctic's main activity is Thematic Networks which fosters issues-based cooperation within networks that are focused but flexible enough to respond quickly to topical Arctic issues. They form a natural framework for development of UArctic education and research providing an optimal structure for increasing the knowledge generation and sharing across the North. Currently UArctic has 32 networks and three UArctic Institutes. These networks have already been very active; an example is the Model Arctic Council event organized at the Arctic Science Summit Week in Fairbanks, Alaska, US, in March 2016. The first Arctic Massive Open Online Course was also launched through a collaboration of UArctic partner institutions.

UArctic continues to emphasize the importance of academic mobility as a key part of international cooperation among the network.

The north2north+ feasibility study, a two-year project in 2014-2015, examines options to build on the current north2north student mobility program to create a comprehensive structural mobility program to serve the circumpolar region. The future north2north would address needs for academic mobility including shorter term exchanges for staff and graduate students, and partnerships with industry and enterprise, as well as serving the region's indigenous peoples. In parallel to these developments, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands have become full participants in the north2north program after a very successful "MobilityDK" pilot.

UArctic continues to draw strong leaders from its member institutions. In 2015 Gerald Anderson was welcomed as Vice-President Indigenous and Sheila Downer as Vice-President Finance, Development and Engagement, both from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

For more information

www.uarctic.org