

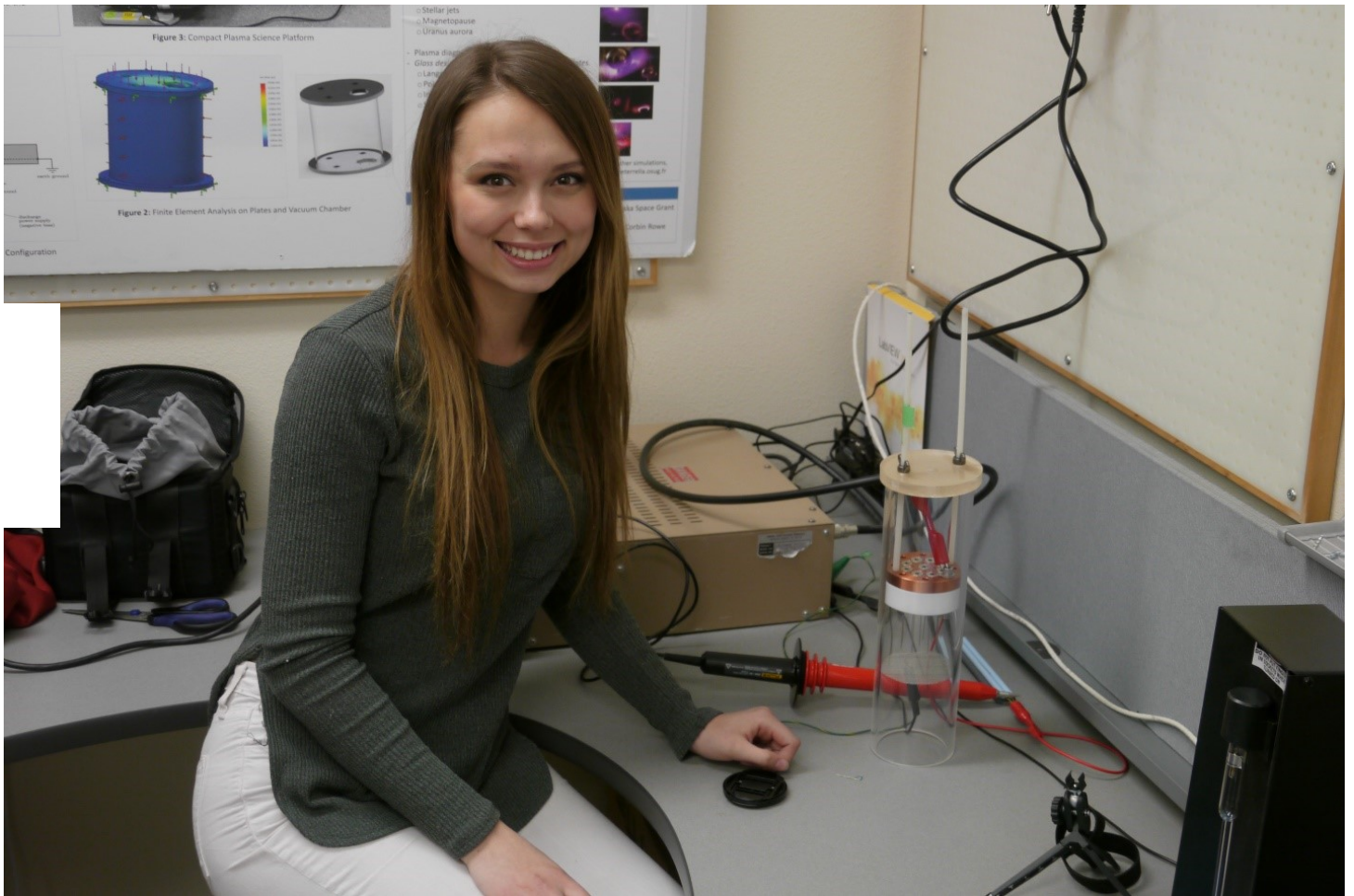
Chancellor announces changes in research administration

By **Marie Ries** - October 29, 2018

TIAA Chancellor Cathy Sandeen recently announced plans for the establishment of a task force for research with other changes in research administration. Earlier in October, Interim Provost John Stalvey announced the appointment of George Kamberov as Interim Vice Provost for Research.



Raghu Srinivasan, mechanical engineering faculty, and Breton Henry, mechanical engineering graduate student, installing modular atmospheric corrosion test racks on top of ECB parking garage. Photo credit: Office of Research



Natural sciences student Sara Rutz working with Professor Nathaniel Hicks on her research project in the UAA plasma lab. Photo credit: Office of Research



A student and a researcher on a floatplane flight to study an invasive aquatic plant species. Photo credit: Office of Research

Even though UAA is a public university not primarily focused on research, Sandeen wants to consolidate support for research at the university.

“I am particularly drawn to UAA’s broad spectrum of basic, translational and applied research funded by a variety of sources,” Sandeen said in an email to the UAA community. “Though we are not classified as a research university per se, this vital work supports our mission as an engaged public university.”

Interim Vice Provost Kamberov, who holds a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Pennsylvania, joined UAA about five years ago. Previously, he served as associate research professor of computer science at the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey.

In his new position as interim vice provost, Kamberov is overseeing the UAA Office of Research with exception of the graduate school. He believes that research is crucial to the success of the university.

“It’s part of the mission. If our mission is to achieve excellence, one of the best ways is to actually have well-grasped research,” Kamberov said.

Amer Chaudhry, UAA biological and natural sciences major, has been doing undergraduate research for about a year now. He is working on a research project with Eric Bortz, UAA professor for biological sciences. “His research is focusing on reactivating a specific kind of cells to kill cancer cells.

and a professor that I like, and I’ve always liked immunology,” Chaudhry said.

Chaudhry plans to go to medical school after getting his bachelor’s degree. He appreciates the project as an opportunity to apply what he learns in class “in a realistic way.” Chaudhry will continue his research until his graduation and possibly even after that.

He thinks that the prioritization of research at UAA is going to be beneficial for all students.

“It’s a great opportunity to get involved in labs,” Chaudhry said. “Getting involved in research will be beneficial for students no matter [what degree they are in].”

Kamberov emphasizes the importance of students in research work. As a professor, he started teaching entrance level courses to begin working with students early in their college career.

“Very few researchers can do things by themselves,” Kamberov said. “We cannot survive without students.”

He not only wants students to work on projects of their professors but also to “turn the table around” and have students bring in own ideas.

“Especially the Native students, the students who come from the villages often come with very interesting problems – very Alaska specific,” Kamberov said. “If you actually listen to them, you can make extremely interesting research projects.”

Projects unique to Alaska often have a good chance of being funded, according to Kamberov.

“Because it’s a great story – and people like to hear great stories,” Kamberov said. “There is so little we know, there is so little we understand and Alaska is changing so much faster than the rest of the globe... It’s

an incredibly interesting environment to work in.”

Sandeen plans to build the task force in cooperation with different UAA governance groups, deans and directors.

“It is imperative that we have a robust and responsive research administration unit. But we need to answer a few fundamental questions in order to accomplish that,” Sandeen said in the email.

Research at UAA has been growing steadily in the past few years. The external funding for research has increased by 23 percent since 2013; total grant awards grew from \$38 million in the fiscal year 2015 to \$40.2 million in 2016.

Kamberov supports the decision to form a task force for research administration considering the growth of the UAA research programs.

“Sometimes you grow very fast... and it’s good to actually step back and have somebody else look and say we will look this is what you need to do and that’s the goal of the task force,” Kamberov said.

Kamberov will be cooperating with the Honors College on future projects. He plans to spend the remaining weeks of the fall semester working on more research opportunities for students.

Students can find more information about research at UAA under uaa.alaska.edu/research.