

DRAFT DECLARATION

(prepared by UArctic Secretariat and UAF host committee for Rectors' consideration)

University of the Arctic

Fourth Rectors' Forum, Fairbanks, Alaska

Postsecondary education's roles in community capacity building and adaptation in a rapidly changing circumpolar North

The Fourth UArctic Rectors' Forum focused on climate, energy security, and the health and well-being of Northern communities. We, University of the Arctic postsecondary institutional members participating in the Fourth Rectors' Forum, understand that the circumpolar North is changing rapidly due to a variety of forces. Global climate change is being felt first and foremost in the Arctic; the peoples and communities of the North are witnessing and experiencing the effects of these changes. Equally, we agree the solutions to address the impacts of climate change must be developed locally, while being supported by regional and global knowledge and expertise.

These views are further supported by recent, regionally focused, assessment reports (*Arctic Human Development Report 2004; Arctic Social Indicators 2010*) which suggest that adaptation to climate change is emerging as one of the most important concerns northern communities¹ have for the continued development and sustainability of their social, cultural, and economic well-being. Moreover, education is viewed as having a critical role in empowering individuals and communities to respond to ongoing changes in ways that are sustainable and that can serve both internal and external socio-cultural and economic requirements.

Simultaneously, we see tremendous need to increase the knowledge of issues of sustainability, resiliency and adaptations to change. Current knowledge and expertise remain primarily focused at national and international levels. UArctic members have the skill and opportunity to address the needs of northern communities who most require the knowledge transfer; we can provide a vital platform for joint action.

UArctic members are ideally placed in a network that, through closer cooperation between higher education institutions and external partners, can provide unique venues for policy changes, enable interdisciplinary research, facilitate student and faculty exchanges, and develop collaborative study programs. Consequently, these educational activities can connect stakeholders and support the sharing of experience and data necessary for effective development and implementation of adaptation strategies in northern communities.

University of the Arctic has an overall goal to create a strong, sustainable circumpolar region by empowering northerners and indigenous peoples through education, training and shared knowledge. UArctic's Strategic Plan 2008-2013 identifies adaptation to

¹ To clarify, *communities* as defined here means groups of people who share common geography and on some level a social network (e.g. small communities such as remote villages with an indigenous and / or local population, as well as larger urban centres).

climate change as one of its priority areas of engagement. In this context, UArctic seeks to promote excellence in knowledge generation. Furthermore, and in this application, perhaps most importantly, that knowledge must be created within a distributed network that values shared ownership by and relevance to students, leaders, and communities of the North.

The participants of the Fourth UArctic Rectors' Forum emphasise the need to cooperate to help ensure that communities in the North more sustainable, resilient and able to adapt to the challenges related to rapid changes – both climatic and societal. This Rectors' Forum initiated a graduate student seminar, and the Rectors welcome the student recommendations, which are attached to this declaration. The Rectors Forum discussed emerging issues of tourism in Northern communities, and attaches the recommendations of the tourism thematic group.

The UArctic Rectors will collaborate, lead and act in the following areas:

Structural changes in postsecondary education

- The University of the Arctic is a powerful instrument to develop joint programs that are international, multi- and interdisciplinary, focusing on challenges and opportunities in the North. These initiatives can also lead to joint or double degrees.
- At the same time internationalized individual universities enhance general awareness about important issues like climate change and educate and train new experts in these fields.
- Thematic networks will enhance the quality of Northern research. We will prioritize doctoral education in international research programs .

Health, well-being and societal impacts of rapid changes in the North

- To enhance collaborations between institutions and between institutions and communities, we will use our resources effectively (UArctic, Arctic Council Thematic Networks).
- Core values when conducting research with indigenous and local communities include:
 - Respect for local values and priorities
 - Engaging relevant research and programs with culturally appropriate research protocols
 - Reciprocity (bidirectional benefit and learning)
 - Reliable activities that will be sustained.

We will implement these core values into the UArctic activities.

- Community trust is built over time and through enhanced engagement of communities to identify research needs and design collaborative research projects. This will result in community ownership and capacity building.
- Member institutions will develop more internal capacity within our communities to deal with challenges. We will integrate e-Learning/flexible learning platforms (e.g. telemedicine, social networking) into health and education to increase access to information and formal/informal education.

- UArctic member institutions will participate to formulate action plans that link the development of local human and technical capacities with local and regional adaptation strategies, based on appropriate communication and dissemination of results.

Climate, energy and natural resources

- UArctic member institutions will share resources such as field stations, educational and experimental facilities, modelling and forecasting systems, training programmes, staff, faculty, and student exchanges.
- UArctic and its members will promote knowledge exchange that supports greater understanding of how impacts of climate change are distributed among regions and societies; and that recognise the challenges faced by a rapidly changing North.
- UArctic graduate strategic area will promote common courses on climate change, adaptation and resilience that can be offered by UArctic member institutions; these courses can be offered to students, decision-makers, and the communities we serve.
- UArctic member institutions will participate in current UArctic community project collaborations and / or initiate new partnership projects that support the need for greater understanding of traditional knowledge and local adaptive capacities towards climate change, energy, and community health and well-being.
- UArctic members will conduct outreach and informal education that provide knowledge and understanding of how existing and potential change impacts affect the well-being of individuals and their communities so that these communities can make informed decisions.

Tourism Addendum

An Arctic tourist destination has several roles, it must:

- Seek to enhance the well-being of the residents who live within its boundaries
- Provide tourism experiences that create shared memories to enhance the well-being of visitors as well residents
- Provide the activities and experiences enjoyed by the visitor in a manner that enables the destination to operate sustainably - economic, environmental, social and cultural - to the benefit of residents

Post-secondary education and business should collaborate to:

- Identify the common needs of Arctic tourism regions and businesses
- Gather the best practices of tourism businesses, organizations and education that transfer Arctic skills and knowledge for the betterment of all
- Instill confidence in our residents that a tourism education and career will lead to a successful life in the Arctic

Post-secondary education and business should assist Indigenous peoples who are interested in developing tourism by:

- Identifying how tourism can strengthen the well-being of their culture
- Implementing successful business models , developing skills and infrastructure that can sustain Arctic communities through tourism