



**UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC**

# Strategic Plan

2005-2010



## ***Forward***

Providing high quality education to northern peoples is vitally important in order to equip our youth and adults with the knowledge necessary to compete in this complex world we live in.

In any culture, knowledge is power. In our northern regions, it is also the great equalizer. In the past half century, we have experienced a whirlwind of change, much of it leaving aboriginal people at the negative extremes of the social economic statistics. We can, and will change that by combining academic education with our knowledge and embracing education values as a necessary part of our daily existence and future.

The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a new institution with a clear mandate to meet these needs. Through developing courses, programs and research initiatives relevant and sensitive to the many cultures and languages of northern peoples, its commitment is to contribute to a stronger and more prosperous Arctic region, and a clear Circumpolar presence in the Global community.

UArctic was created to provide higher education, appropriate to indigenous cultures, languages and identity, that addresses the unique environmental and geographic realities faced by Arctic communities. It will provide education programs relevant to the social, economic, and environmental challenges that are emerging across the Circumpolar World. The challenges are broad and complex, ranging from social and environmental threats associated with climate change, to providing training and employment opportunities for a young and a rapidly growing population.

UArctic will help educate the people of the North, whether they are indigenous or not, providing them with the tools to help their communities tackle sustainable development issues. This will contribute to forming flourishing societies with vibrant economies that include shipping, airlines, fisheries, education, health and social well-being, and community development.

Simply put, our overall UArctic goal is to create a strong, sustainable circumpolar region by empowering northerners and northern communities through education and shared knowledge.

### **Ms. Mary Simon**

**Canada's former Ambassador of Circumpolar Affairs and former  
Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark, member of UArctic Board of  
Governors**

*“The University of the Arctic is a bold, new stage in the evolution of a circumpolar academy. By developing and sharing northern knowledge, we have begun to transform educational opportunities for our communities.”*

**Sally Webber**

President, Yukon College, Canada and Chair of the UArctic Council

## **Who Are We?**

The University of the Arctic (UArctic) is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, and other organizations committed to higher education and research in the North.

Our members share resources, facilities, and expertise to build post-secondary education programs that are relevant and accessible to northern students. Our overall goal is to create a strong, sustainable circumpolar region by empowering northerners and northern communities through education and shared knowledge.

We promote education that is circumpolar, interdisciplinary, and diverse in nature, and we draw on our combined strengths to address the unique challenges of the region. UArctic recognizes the integral role of indigenous peoples in northern education and seeks to engage their perspectives in its activities.

*“The University of the Arctic provides a unique opportunity for our students to receive the most valuable information about the Arctic on a global scale. Students share not only the resources of their institution, but of the many others who are connected via UArctic.”*

**Vasili M. Zadorozhniy**

Rector, Syktuvkar University, Russia

*“Sustainable development in the North can only be supported by a strong, educated public. A priority of educational and research institutions should be the cultivation and communication of indigenous knowledge; further, to both facilitate and strengthen the ability of indigenous peoples to participate in the development process.”*

**Sergey Kharuchi**

President, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON)

## **Our Values**

### *Regional identity...*

UArctic shall promote a northern voice in the globalizing world that reflects a shared regional identity across all eight Arctic states and among all Arctic cultures and peoples.

### *Interdisciplinarity ...*

UArctic shall promote an understanding between different learning systems, bringing together perspectives from both social and natural sciences, and from traditional knowledge to foster an approach based on issues and needs rather than disciplines.

### *Diversity...*

UArctic shall promote cultural diversity, language plurality, and gender equality while highlighting the partnership between the region's indigenous peoples and other northerners.

*“UArctic can achieve its goals only through its members, and their engagement and enthusiasm for the sustainable development of the Circumpolar World. UArctic's programs are developed and implemented by members throughout the Arctic, valuing both conventional academic and traditional indigenous knowledge systems, for the benefit of northerners and their communities.”*

**Lars Kullerud**

Director, University of the Arctic

Our Vision  
**In the North  
For the North  
By the North**

Northerners are empowered with  
the tools to shape our own future

## **Our Organization**

The highest decision making body in UArctic is the international Board of Governors. The Board has responsibility for the overall strategic development, institutional priorities and finances of UArctic. The UArctic Council, consisting of representatives of all members, appoints the Board members, decides on UArctic membership, gives academic guidance, and acts as a forum for consulting and cooperating on the implementation of UArctic programs through its members.

UArctic's operations are focussed on five Strategic Areas: Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies, Mobility, Access, and Knowledge and Dialogue. Each of these consists of one or more programs, lead by a Program Chair. Program Chairs are responsible for all operations of their program, including budget management and reporting on program activities. Many programs have program offices.

UArctic is a decentralized organization; all offices, programs and other functions are hosted by member institutions. The daily operations are entrusted to a light and distributed administration consisting of the Director, International Secretariat and International Academic Office.

In order to ensure the continued operation and delivery of UArctic programs and courses, stable long-term funding for our Circumpolar Studies courses, the north2north student mobility programs, student support offices, program chairs, as well as a light management structure are a priority. Shorter term funding is normally sought for new course or program development. Member institutions cover the cost of services to students, including on-campus delivery of programs and some program development as well as in-kind support to UArctic offices.

*"We all need more opportunities to study and learn our environment. It's vital nowadays to make sure the Arctic's educational potential is secured for the future. Education is a power for people, a key for better life in some way. That is why an institution like UArctic is crucial to the people of the Arctic - it offers an education in the context of the Circumpolar World and further defines an Arctic resident's way of life."*

**Ekaterina Evseyeva**

Student Representative to UArctic Board of Governors

## ***Our Goals***

Guided by our vision and our values, the University of the Arctic seeks to...

### ***1. Empower the North...***

Empower the residents of the Circumpolar North by building human capital through higher education.

### ***2. Improve Access to Education...***

Reduce barriers to higher education in the North in order to provide increased opportunities for northerners.

### **3. Serve Our Community...**

Develop initiatives in partnership with our community, and particularly with indigenous peoples, that are responsive to their needs and support their aspirations.

### **4. Create Shared Knowledge...**

Create shared knowledge and provide quality discussion on contemporary issues related to the Circumpolar North.

### **5. Build Regional Identity...**

Build a shared regional identity while valuing inclusiveness and respect for diversity across the region.

### **6. Strengthen the Voice of the Arctic...**

Strengthen the Circumpolar North's role in the world by increasing knowledge about Arctic issues.

*“One of the key priorities of UArctic is to assist, through education, the development of sustainable regional economies. This priority cannot be met in the north without developing the capacity to develop and deliver northern focused educational programming.”*

**Ms. Mary Simon**

Canada's former Ambassador of Circumpolar Affairs and former Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark, member of UArctic Board of Governors

## ***Our Foundation***

The University of the Arctic has initiated by the Arctic Council member states and the organizations it was created to serve. The Ministers of the Arctic Council stated in the Iqaluit Declaration of 1998:

*The Ministers, “welcome, and are pleased to announce the establishment of the University of the Arctic, a university without walls...”*

The governments of the Arctic Council member states and the Permanent Participant Organizations have continued to affirm their support for UArctic through the Arctic Council. UArctic was officially launched in Finland in June 2001 and the commitment to support UArctic was reconfirmed in the Inari Declaration in 2002:

*The Ministers, “welcome the good progress of the University of the Arctic and encourage appropriate authorities in the Arctic states to increase their efforts to secure financing of the core activities of the University of the Arctic.”*

At the first meeting of the Ministers of Education and Science from the Arctic Council member countries in Reykjavik, June 2004, representatives agreed to focus on existing education institutions and research organizations, give priority to cooperation in higher education and research, increase mobility among researchers and students, and involve young researchers of indigenous origin in national and international research and scientific exchange programs. Further, they

*“applauded the efforts of the University of the Arctic to raise awareness and to improve understanding of the natural and cultural circumstances of the Arctic through its different education programs.”*

Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region have expressed their support of UArctic activities throughout its history. This continuing support has been vitally important for the creation and growth of UArctic, its programs and projects, from out foundation and into the future.

*“Students in the North have different learning needs and must overcome different obstacles to get a university education than do students in the South. The Circumpolar Studies Program fits the student, instead of making the student fit the program. Sustainable development, economic opportunity, and preservation of culture go hand-in-hand with relevant and accessible education. What we’re trying to achieve through the program is a brighter future for all northerners.”*

**Greg Poelzer**

Dean of Undergraduate Studies, University of the Arctic

## ***Our Programs***

### ***Undergraduate Studies***

Undergraduate Studies includes programs that focus on building human capital and knowledge about the North among its residents and others. These programs address the full continuum of learning through both traditional and new approaches, and implement life-long learning strategies to empower northerners with the tools needed to shape our own future. Undergraduate education programs are developed, in partnership with indigenous peoples, with an aim to support all northerners’ needs for community development.

### ***Circumpolar Studies Program (BCS)***

The Circumpolar Studies Program is a new way for students attending University of the Arctic to learn about the North, with courses held in the classroom, online, in the field, and around the world. Using both academic and traditional indigenous knowledge, the Circumpolar Studies Program gives students an

opportunity to learn about the lands, peoples, and issues of the Circumpolar World. It prepares students for advanced study or professional employment in diverse fields, such as sustainable resource management, self-government, Arctic engineering, and northern tourism.

### ***Open Learning***

Focusing on shorter and more practical courses and skills training, Open Learning approaches fit well with the needs of northern communities and will be applied to deliver higher education to northerners as a supplement to the traditional university program structure. This program area promotes new routes of access to higher education, thereby increasing participation. Open Learning will also allow northern institutions to provide improved knowledge about the Arctic to the world to more Southern students.

*“The best moment for me was during the final exam: while writing my exam, I suddenly realized that what I was writing down was information collected from all the different BCS learning modules and from across many different fields and text. I have had such a great satisfaction from successfully completing each of the course modules, and even mores so now with the realization that I have learned so much during this course! Wow! I know so many new things about the Circumpolar World – and that so much of the North is interconnected – this was surprising and very rewarding! I’m now planning on taking another BCS course, and in the future, many more.”*

**Elena Egortseva**

BCS 100 student, Murmansk, Russia

*“It is a privilege to live and do research in the Arctic. International multi-scientific cooperation has made it possible to assess the magnitude and impacts of global warming. The Arctic environment is particularly sensitive to the climate change and glaciers tell the same harsh story.”*

**Anna Sinisalo**

PhD student, Glaciology, Rovaniemi, Finland

### ***Graduate Studies***

Graduate Studies programs focus on networking between northern students, improving the cooperation and sharing of education capacity among member institutions, as well as improving the quality and relevance of existing graduate studies programs. The programs shall support and build the next generation of

northern researchers and other experts, including the creation of new opportunities for indigenous peoples to take an active part in Arctic research.

### **Field School**

The UArctic Field School incorporates a selection of short, thematically-focused courses that provide training for young researchers at member institutions in relevant fields. The Field School provides specialized study in authentic northern locations organized by northern institutions.

### **PhD Networks**

PhD networks promote regional cooperation and identity among advanced students, build an academic community among northern researchers, and develop their opportunities for education and communication with policy-makers.

*“In my own research, I have found kinship ties to be an essential element of Greenlandic culture and society. Likewise, I have found ties among my academic and research colleagues to be highly relevant to the ‘academic fabric’ of the North. By networking with other academics, we are able to weave together many diverse areas of research to both build a greater understanding of the issues facing the North and a curriculum for future Northern issue-based study.”*

#### **Gitte Trondheim**

PhD candidate, University of Greenland

*“I miss my country but I have managed to bring a lot of it with me, in my heart, to share. This exchange has really opened my horizons. I never thought that I would travel and see the world, but now I realize I can, and that many of the barriers in life are surmountable.”*

#### **Robin Ranger**

North2north student from Lakehead University (Canada) in Murmansk, Russia

### **Mobility**

Mobility is crucial for northerners to create shared knowledge and build a shared regional identity. Mobility is an efficient means for coordination and collaboration among our often small member institutions. UArctic Mobility programs shall promote and implement increased mobility among teachers, researchers, interns and students, while emphasizing the participation of northerners who have

traditionally had limited access to mobility. Mobility is also an efficient way to increase knowledge about Arctic issues in the world.

### **north2north**

The north2north student exchange program provides opportunities for students to experience different northern regions firsthand, and to share experiences face-to-face by allowing students to study at other UArctic institutions. The program operates in close collaboration with the faculty exchange program to build mutual cooperation that can sustain and support student exchange.

### **northTREX**

The faculty exchange program, northTREX, provides opportunities for northern teachers to gain circumpolar experiences and strengthens northern institutions' abilities to share faculty resources. Faculty assignments are usually linked to thematic networks and student exchange in the north2north program.

### **GoNorth**

The best way to learn about the north is to "GoNorth".

The GoNorth program acts as a 'window' for UArctic member institutions to promote the unique educational opportunities available in the Arctic, and to interest future global leaders in learning about the North, from the North, and in the North.

*"Studying in the Arctic was like diving into the pages of my books, taking the best of their theoretical information and applying it to the real world. It was a challenge to the senses..."*

**Fabiana Oliveira da Silva**

University of the Arctic Field School Student from Brazil

*"Improving access to higher education through the use of ICTs is vitally important in the North. Education should be available to every northerner, no matter how geographically remote."*

**Thorsteinn Gunnarsson**

Rector, University of Akureyri, Iceland

### **Access**

The geographical, physical, and cultural challenges of the Arctic require special efforts to deliver education that is accessible to all northerners. Information and communications technologies (ICT) offer future possibilities, but the lack of basic ICT services in the most rural areas of the Arctic is still an enormous challenge to

accessible education. UArctic is constantly looking for new and innovative ways to improve access to higher education for northerners.

### ***Arctic Learning Environment***

The ALE program focuses on finding ways to allow northerners to overcome distance to learn in the North, including finding new and innovative means to overcome cultural barriers and physical distance. The program also seeks to identify relevant and new pedagogical and technological approaches to learning processes to support the delivery of content across the great distances of the region. In the Arctic, people are the most valuable resource; thus, only ICTs that empower people in the process of human capacity building are sustainable.

*“What can we learn from each other? What can we teach each other? How can we advance each others’ research interests? Answers to these questions are what networks of and dialogue among scientists provide – starting points for new research, a shared knowledge base, and hope for future collaboration. Such networks can only better our chances for understanding.”*

**Peter Sköld**

Professor, Umeå University, Sweden

### ***Knowledge and Dialogue***

Together, northerners possess a vast amount of knowledge about their region. By bringing northerners and their experiences together, Knowledge and Dialogue programs generate new ideas and new understandings, which in turn form the basis of our education programs. UArctic’s Knowledge and Dialogue programs complement existing communities of international scientific research in the Arctic, and strengthen northerners’ roles in those activities. This dialogue also extends beyond the North, as many groups outside the region have a strong interest in its future.

### ***Northern Research Forum***

The Northern Research Forum (NRF) is a forum for open discussion among policymakers, business people and other interest groups, the international community, and the research community, directed by its own Steering Committee. The NRF organizes a biennial Open Meeting and other discussion fora that address issues, problems, and opportunities facing northern peoples and societies in the contexts of social, political, and environmental changes, and economic globalization. The NRF is a process with enthusiasm for fresh ideas and research findings, and bringing researchers and other experts together.

### ***Thematic Networks***

Thematic Networks encourage faculty and institutional cooperation on subjects of shared interest among UArctic members. UArctic Thematic Networks aim at

stimulating cooperation, sharing of resources and are important tools for developing stable relations among member institutions that form the backbone of UArctic activities. This includes student and faculty exchange, and joint curriculum and degree development, as well as research.

***Circumpolar Universities Association***

The Circumpolar Universities Association (CUA) is a membership organization directed by its own Steering Committee, which consists of universities and other institutes of higher learning and research in the Circumpolar World whose purpose is to enhance cooperation between its member institutions. CUA organizes the biennial Circumpolar Universities Cooperation Conference.

***Mimir - Research Outreach Program***

UArctic is working closely with existing organizations and institutions engaged in international Arctic science and research. Mimir ensures linkages between existing communities of international scientific research in the Arctic and our members, and strengthens northerners' roles in those activities. Furthermore, Mimir seeks to ensure integration of education programs and ongoing and planned research and science activities.

*“Increased knowledge of Arctic issues can only be achieved through cooperation on a global scale, and dedicated work among researchers, governments, and intergovernmental organizations.”*

**Bruce Forbes**

Professor, University of Lapland, Finland

*“To increase awareness of Arctic issues, and to generate further research on those issues, it is imperative to educate a new generation of students who are capable of addressing the complex interdisciplinary issues facing the Arctic.*

*Innovative educational initiatives, such as UArctic, help to build circumpolar networks of students and faculty working in various scientific fields. These networks provide a strong base for cooperation and future research, and can only help to further understanding and scholarship of Arctic issues.”*

**Richard Caulfield**

Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks

## ***History of UArctic***

In March 1997, prompted by Arctic Council discussions on the topic of Arctic higher education, a proposal was made to the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) of the Arctic Council regarding a 'University of the Arctic.' This proposal envisaged a geographically dispersed institution that combined the strengths of existing establishments by bringing together students and staff. Benefits would include the sharing of Arctic knowledge, costs of expensive and/or underused facilities, and expanded opportunities for access to education among the region's residents, in particular, for the indigenous peoples of the region.

The official launch of the University of the Arctic occurred in Rovaniemi, Finland, on June 12, 2001, in conjunction with the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rovaniemi process. In the years following the launch, membership has increased steadily and the administrative structures to support governance and programs have been consolidated. UArctic's programs and activities have steadily progressed from the planning stage to full implementation.

This document is a revised version of the Strategic Plan from 2003. The modifications include small changes in the organizational structure as well as revised program descriptions.