

Good evening. On behalf of UAF and the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, I would like to thank you for joining us at our Natural Resources and Natural Sciences Career Fair.

Many people often draw an imaginary line between going to school and going to work. That line, people assume, is what separates "academia" from what people like to call the "real world". If I were to draw that line in this room, that would mean I would separate the students (over here) from those of you already in the real world (over there).

But this would be a disservice to our students and to our students' future employers.

That's why at the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, we train our students in the real world.

This means that we all work and study as a community of scholars, where we form partnerships both inside and outside of the boundaries of the classroom and university lab. Our students, faculty and researchers collaborate with over 60 state, national, international and private agencies. Our students spend their summers working for potential employers, out in the field doing research, or as interns at various agencies and organizations. The relationships our students make as undergraduates and graduates carry over into their careers.

Students at our school conduct frontier research all over Alaska. At UAF, we like to say that we offer a 360 million acre classroom. At the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, we also throw in a few thousands of miles of coastline, the largest fishery in the world, and a couple of oceans too. For example, one of our graduate students, Alison Banks, spends almost three months a year living and researching endangered Northern Fur Seals on a tiny island in the Bering Sea. Another student is currently diving under the sea ice in Antarctica.

By emphasizing field and laboratory research, our students get a jump-start on the problem-solving skills required in the "real world." They learn to think critically and how to communicate the outcomes of their research.

Many of our students also gain experience in a variety of communities across Alaska. Our school is unique among the schools and colleges at UAF, because we have multiple facilities across Alaska. Although we have about 170 students at the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, more than half of those students are studying at locations outside of Fairbanks. We have students, faculty and researchers at our units in Juneau, Seward, Anchorage and Kodiak, where they are deeply involved with the local community.

Whether a student at our school is studying oceanography, marine biology, or fisheries, he or she is also learning how to function in the "real world". By bringing the real world to them by providing opportunities for research and collaboration, our students learn how to be successful scientists and future employees.