

Letter from the Principal Investigator

February 2016

Hello to all,

We gained almost 7 minutes of sunlight yesterday here in Fairbanks, and as I look out my window at the blue sky above, it seems like spring must be right around the corner.

Of course, we won't be seeing any blossoms or sprouts for three months or so, but it's a different story in the Lower 48. By the time our NSF EPSCoR contingent arrives in Washington D.C. for the USA Science and Engineering Festival in mid-April, they'll already be past the prime of the cherry blossoms. Alaska EPSCoR was invited to the festival to display two items: One of our augmented-reality sandboxes, and a fantastic interactive display we created about our "Modern Blanket Toss" program. More than 350,000 people attend the festival each year, so it's a real honor to be selected for this prestigious event.

Even as we display some of the fruits of our current funding, we're hard at work applying for more. We recently put forward several applications for "Track-2" funds, which support collaborations with NSF EPSCoR programs in other states and territories. A proposal by UAF Associate Professor of Engineering Rich Wies would partner with the EPSCoR program in Guam, while UAA Assistant Professor of Public Health Elizabeth Hodges-Snyder proposed a partnership with Montana EPSCoR. Both are roughly \$4 million projects that focus on aspects of the food-energy-water nexus, an NSF funding priority. UAA Assistant Professor of Computer Science Martin Cenek also applied for a subaward in a proposal out of Idaho.

On a much larger scale is our proposal for a five-year, \$20 million "Track-1" award, which if successful would dictate the direction of Alaska NSF EPSCoR research beginning in 2017. After receiving and evaluating 54 white papers from UA faculty, we have decided to base our proposal around the theme of environmental tipping points, specifically focusing on two themes: fresh water influx and food webs in coastal marine systems, and forests and forest fires. We've gathered together an eight-person writing team composed of experts from across the UA system and are hard at work fine-tuning the research questions and hypotheses that will form the core of the proposal.

The Track-1 proposal will be due to the NSF in August, by which time the sun will be beating its annual retreat in the far North. That's a long way – and a lot of work – away, and I'm confident we have the people and skills we need to put together an excellent research plan between now and then.

Cheers,



Anupma Prakash



NSF EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH