

Cover sheet

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Is your state or organization still interested in continuing as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

Yes No



Arctic Council Observer Report: UArctic

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University of the Arctic

The University of the Arctic (UARctic) is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, research institutes and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North. UArctic builds and strengthens collective resources and collaborative infrastructure that enables member institutions to better serve their constituents and their regions. Through cooperation in education, research and outreach we enhance human capacity in the North, promote viable communities and sustainable economies, and forge global partnerships.

As a membership organization, UArctic is fully controlled by our member institutions. Our work serves those members and aims to increase cooperation and synergies across the network. Our network's organization and operations models are geared towards maximizing value and impact for our members, students and the region. UArctic members gain value through their participation in the organization. UArctic represents its members' interests internationally by promoting their diverse and shared capacity to serve northern communities and interests.

UARctic's vision is "An Empowered North – With Shared Voices," underlining that all northerners must have a say in their own future and that of the region as a whole. Our mission to "Empower the people of the Circumpolar North by providing unique educational and research opportunities through collaboration within a powerful network of members" reinforces that aim.

Origins in the Arctic Council

UARctic was an initiative born out of the context of the Arctic Council who asked the Circumpolar Universities Association to conduct a feasibility study. That plan was then initially endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the eight Arctic countries through the Iqaluit declaration in 1998, declaring that they "welcome, and are pleased to announce, the establishment of a University of the Arctic, a university without walls...", UArctic was launched as a network organization in 2001 with an International Secretariat in Finland.

In the joint [Ministerial statement](#) on the occasion of the Arctic Council's 20th anniversary, the ministers recognise the creation of UArctic as one of the achievements in the creation of institutions for regional cooperation and interaction in the Arctic.

UARctic also has a rich and close cooperation with the Standing Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians. The parliamentarians' support for sustainable development, education and research in and for the Arctic is immensely important for the future development of the region. UArctic works closely with other regional bodies like the Northern Forum, the Barents cooperation, the Arctic Economic Council and the world reindeer herders to foster locally relevant training and capacity building and to strengthen the local academic institutions.

Contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups

Research Cooperation, Analytics, Support and Outreach

In response to increased interest from our members in greater research cooperation within the network, we developed new tools and initiatives to better serve members and individual researchers. One such example is the new Research Infrastructure Catalogue – an online database of our members' infrastructures and facilities. Additionally, a Research Analytics Task Force was developed and implemented, to better track our members collective research outputs. This led to the first ever discipline-neutral circumpolar study on Arctic research based on the Arctic Council definition of the Arctic.

UArctic contributed actively to the work of the Arctic Council Task Force on Science Cooperation. We look forward to the agreement coming into force and will continue to contribute to a successful implementation of this agreement. Operationally, UArctic collaborates actively with IASC, IASSA (as the three research related observers to the Arctic Council) as well as APECS to promote Arctic research cooperation.

Thematic Networks and Institutes

Examples of UArctic Thematic Networks involvement in projects of Arctic Council working groups, expert groups and task forces include:

- UArctic Thematic Network on Telecommunications and Networking has been involved in organizing the Arctic Broadband Summit, and a survey on Telecommunications and Broadband Needs in the Arctic, working closely with the Arctic Economic Forum and the Arctic Council Task Force on Telecommunications Infrastructure in the Arctic.
- UArctic Thematic Network on Health and Wellbeing has been working for a long time at the AMAP and SDWG AHHEG, also as key authors of the assessments (latest AMAP Assessment 2015: Human Health in the Arctic) and partnering in initiatives such as One Health led by US chairmanship.
- UArctic Thematic Network on Northern Food Security's project "The Arctic as a Food Producing Region" was endorsed in 2016 by SDWG. The work is an important contribution to an Arctic food security.
- UArctic Thematic Network on Natural Hazards has been working with EPPR, and implements courses and programs on ice dammed floods.
- The Arctic Extractive Industries, Energy in New Time, Health and Wellbeing, Working in the Arctic Thematic Networks among others continue to deliver PhD level training in all Arctic regions that will create highly skilled future generations of Arctic leaders.
- The UArctic Institute for Arctic Policy (University of Alaska Fairbanks and Dartmouth College) were the lead scholars of the Arctic Fulbright Program, a key part of the US Arctic Council Chairmanship program.
- The UArctic EÀLAT Institute has projects in the SDWG working group, including EALINN (Youth. The Future of Reindeer Herding Peoples).

- The international Model Arctic Council took place at the Arctic Science Summit Week in March 2016, organized by the University of Alaska Fairbanks as part of the UArctic Model Arctic Council Thematic Network. The event was organized in conjunction with the Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials, who were in attendance.

Arctic MOOCs

The first, out of four, basic Arctic understanding Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was also launched through a collaboration of UArctic partner institutions (UAlberta and UIT - the Arctic University of Norway).. When finished it will be the authority go-to place for basic learning and understanding of the Arctic. The reports of Arctic Council working groups have been valuable contribution to this work.

UArctic Liaison to the Arctic Council

Vice Chancellor Mike Sfraga of the University of Alaska Fairbanks has been appointed by UArctic to serve as our liaison to the Arctic Council to strengthen our mutual work and communication during the US chairmanship. As liaison, he shall be in regular dialogue with UArctic's leadership as well as UArctic representatives to specific Arctic Council bodies such as working groups and task forces. Specifically, this aims to improve the work of UArctic's Thematic Networks and Institutes in supporting the work of the Arctic Council through its working groups.

Indigenous Engagement

UArctic's Vice-President Indigenous and our Indigenous Issues Committee work closely in cooperation with the Permanent Participant organizations of the Arctic Council to ensure that all UArctic activities are responsive to the needs of northern indigenous peoples, and contribute positively to the well-being of northern indigenous communities. This cooperation is acknowledged in a Memorandum of Understanding between UArctic and the indigenous peoples' organizations.

Academic Mobility

UArctic has long believed that giving students the possibility of studying in another Arctic country is a fundamental means of building a truly circumpolar region, and fostering the next generation of northern leaders. The north2north+ feasibility study, a two-year project in 2014-15, examined options for the future of our north2north student mobility program to better serve the circumpolar region. A future north2north would address needs for academic mobility including shorter-term exchanges for staff and graduate students, and partnerships with industry and enterprise, as well as serving the region's indigenous peoples.

To strengthen this field, UArctic has established a Vice-President Mobility (hosted by UIT the Arctic University of Norway) to increase strategic leadership capacity to develop this very important element of circumpolar collaboration. We are working in partnership with the Arctic Economic Council to elaborate possibilities for professional development, internships and traineeships within the program. In parallel to these developments, Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands have become full participants in the north2north program after a very successful MobilityDK pilot.

UArctic has supported the US Fulbright Arctic program and we are pleased to observe that this initiative will lead to long-term follow-up as a new UArctic Thematic Network in UArctic on Renewable Energy in the Arctic which we expect also will be valuable for the Arctic Council work.

Contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals

Shared Voices Special Issue: Arctic Council at 20

With financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UArctic helped mark the occasion of twenty years of the Arctic Council by developing a special edition of our Shared Voices magazine. This special issue looks back at the Arctic Council's past successes and where it is headed. The project culminated at a special event at Arctic Frontiers in January 2016 featuring a round-table of SAOs and working group representatives. Three of UArctic's Student Ambassadors shared their thoughts on the future of the region and the Arctic Council and UArctic's leading roles in that process. See uarctic.org/shared-voices. This project also supported the publication of the 2016 Arctic Yearbook, which also focussed on the work of the Arctic Council.

Student Ambassadors

UArctic's Student Ambassador Program is a select group of student leaders who represent UArctic and their home institutions, and promote the network and its activities among their peers both online and in high profile events. The first group of Student Ambassadors met in a four-day training workshop in Tromsø, Norway in connection with the Arctic Frontiers conference in 2015 and again during the UArctic Congress 2016 in St. Petersburg. In addition, the Ambassadors have represented UArctic in other high-level Arctic meetings.

UArctic Congress 2016

The first ever UArctic Congress was held in Saint Petersburg in September 2016, The Congress was the first time that all UArctic bodies – Rectors' Forum, Board of Governors, Council and Thematic Networks – met together in the same location, and was well attended by leading scientists, and political decision-makers including the Finnish and Russian SAOs. The Science Section of the Congress involved a high number of excellent sessions and plenaries, with themes taken from the International Conference on Arctic Research Planning (ICARP III) process. The UArctic Congress Declaration, highlighted UArctic's support of the Arctic Council's commitment to science-based decision-making, and research cooperation.

UArctic partners with other major Arctic conferences to help build the science and education agenda and promote the engagement of northern higher education institutions into the programs. These include Arctic Circle, Arctic Frontiers, Arctic Dialogue, the Arctic Science Summit Week, where we cooperate closely with IASC as UArctic has a representative at the Scientific program Committee. UArctic is also represented in IASC working groups by individual thematic networks, particularly in social and human sciences working group.

Non-Arctic Engagement

UArctic's engagement with non-Arctic countries (nearly all from Arctic Council observer countries) increased in 2015-2016, demonstrated by the growth in UArctic membership from outside the Arctic countries, particularly from China. There are now a total of nineteen non-Arctic member institutions. Concrete initiatives with non-Arctic partners such as the Korean Arctic Academy, organized by UArctic and Korea Maritime Institute, demonstrate the value of this cooperation.

Future Plans

UArctic Congress 2018 Finland

The UArctic Congress 2016 concluded with a panel including Finland's SAO Aleksi Härkönen, who announced that education would be a key focus of Finland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2017 would be education. The Council of UArctic has decided that the next Congress will be held in Finland in 2018 and in the future the Congress will follow each Arctic Council Chairmanship's priorities.

Education Focus of Finnish Chairmanship

UArctic's Thematic Network on Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity in Education will be a key part of the education focus during Finland's chairmanship. The network plans to share best practices in inclusive practices; participation digitalization, and pedagogical models among teacher education networks. During the Finnish Chairmanship, these activities will include international symposia in 2017 (with the Finnish Teacher Education Forum) and 2018 (with the UArctic Congress). These activities are planned as part of a project with the Arctic Council's SDWG.

Increased Cooperation with the Arctic Economic Council

UArctic will continue to develop its good working relationship with the Arctic Economic Council. These efforts will include expanding mobility opportunities to include professional traineeships, short courses for executives and professionals, and connecting student job seekers to employment opportunities.

Working Group Activities from Thematic Networks

- Two Model Arctic Council are planned to take place in Finland during its Arctic Council chairmanship. The first would take place in October 2017 in Oulu, Finland, and the second would take place in October 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland (both back-to-back to the Senior Arctic Officials meetings).
- The new UArctic Thematic on Arctic Safety and Security work closely with EPPR and PAME to become a strong tool to ensure long-term collaborative research and education in the Arctic that can support the Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement.
- Thematic Network on Health and Wellbeing will continue the work at AMAP and SDWG AHHEG having important role during Finnish Arctic Council chairmanship e.g. "One Health" initiative will be continued.
- SDWG endorsed project "The Arctic as a Food Producing Region" by Thematic Network on Northern Food Security will continue until 2019.