The members of the Thirty-First Alaska State Legislature celebrate the 20th anniversary of the University of Alaska’s Scholars Program.

The UA Scholars Program recognizes Alaska’s top high school graduates through awarding scholarships to attend the University of Alaska. Each year, Alaskan high school students graduating in the top ten percent of their class are awarded a $12,000 merit scholarship, which can be used to attend any UA campus. The program is funded by revenue from property sales and resource development conducted on university lands.

The University of Alaska founded the UA Scholars Program in 1999 as a way to retain Alaska’s best high school students. Before the program was established, many top students left Alaska to attend college. An average of forty-one percent of eligible students who receive the UA Scholars award now choose to attend the University of Alaska.

The program’s founding was a turning point for the University of Alaska. The UA Scholars Program changed the face of higher education in Alaska, and has become one of the most successful financial aid programs in Alaska history. In twenty years, the UA Scholars Program has provided financial aid to more than 8,900 students.

Financial assistance is critical for increasing student access and success in higher education. The program is an incentive for students to achieve academic excellence and attend college in Alaska. The UA Scholars Program helps address the educational attainment gap, which is essential to secure economic prosperity. The program also helps ensure Alaskans are ready for today’s fast-paced, highly competitive job marketplace.

The UA Scholars Award continues to help retain Alaska’s top high school graduates, and greatly benefits the university. UA Scholars represent all corners of Alaska, serving as ambassadors between their community and the university.

The members of the Thirty-First Alaska State Legislature honor the 20th anniversary of the UA Scholars Program, and applaud the generations of college graduates the university has provided to Alaska.