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University of Alaska

Teacher Education Plan 2010

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Summary of the University of Alaska Teacher Education Plan

Recruit, retain, and graduate more students in education, particularly Alaska residents.

- Expand recruitment, retention, and completion efforts.
Performance Target: Increase the total number of graduates of all education programs by 4% annually for the next five years.
- Expand recruitment, retention, and completion efforts for under-represented minority students.
Performance Target: Increase the number of under-represented minority graduates by 4% annually for the next five years.
- Endorse Alaska educator loan repayment and incentive programs.

Increase program access through multiple delivery methods.

- Increase and improve program delivery options.
- Invest in instructional technology and professional development.
Performance Target: 50% of all academic year 2011-2012 education courses at each campus will be accessible to non-traditional students, or those residing outside urban areas.
- Establish the Alaska Education Consortium, a statewide working group of education professionals.
Performance Target: Begin holding regular Alaska Education Consortium audio and face-to-face meetings by June 2011.
- Increase alternative routes to licensure.
Performance Target: Meet the demand for alternative certification documented by the Alaska Education Consortium with rigorous programs based upon proven teacher preparation models.

Enhance educator preparation programs in Special Education and in math and science teaching.

- Improve data on the demand for teachers with specific credentials.
- Increase recruitment into Alaska high demand teaching job areas.
Performance Target: Increase the number of pre-college students participating in future educator experiences by 10% per year for the next five years.
- Collaborate with external entities to increase recruitment into and completion of education programs in Alaska high demand job areas.
- Collaborate to strengthen Special Education programs.
- Collaborate with colleagues in UA academic disciplines to align program offerings in high demand job areas.
Performance Target: The distribution of areas of certification of graduates of UA education programs will be similar to the distribution of demand for teachers within 10 years.

Conduct research to identify causes and propose solutions for education challenges in Alaska.

- Increase UA education faculty research capacity.
Performance Target: Meet priority research needs of the Alaska Education Consortium.

INTRODUCTION

Alaska's public schools face many challenges in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. Low salaries, the high cost of living, schools in corrective action, isolation and limited teacher housing in rural Alaska, new policies related to teacher certification, the State's retirement system, and more lucrative career opportunities elsewhere are all variables outside of the immediate control of teacher preparation programs. These factors have profound impacts on recruitment of individuals into the profession of education. However, the ongoing challenges have also created opportunities, since both policy makers and the media have focused attention on educational issues.

In response to the demands our graduates face, all of the UA educator preparation programs have revised curriculum; integrated course-work about, and experiences with, diverse learners; and devised instructional delivery strategies to best prepare tomorrow's teachers. For example:

- The UA education units have increased opportunities for students who reside outside Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau to complete degrees and certificates in a variety of education fields.
- UAA, UAF, and UAS graduated a total of 384 educators for Alaska during academic year 2008, 416 during academic year 2009, and 436 in 2010.¹
- UA's initial educator preparation programs have produced 20 – 25% of the educators in the state, and al-

most 30%² of all active FY10 certified school staff earned a certificate or degree through UA.

- In the districts immediately surrounding each campus, UA program completers fill up to 45% of the professional positions.³
- The education units have established numerous partnerships with local school districts for initial teacher preparation, professional development, research, and grant writing.

Accomplishments of existing programs indicate some useful strategies to pursue in increasing the number of newly certified teachers. Examples include Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska's Schools (PITAAS) at UAS, the Alaska Native Teacher Preparation Program at UAF, and a dorm wing for education majors specifically targeting Alaska Native and rural students at UAA. In addition, all three institutions have successful programs in other disciplines that focus on serving under-represented populations, including the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP), the Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI), and Upward Bound. Key features of these programs include academic support; peer mentoring; financial aid advising and access to targeted financial aid; and a learning community that fosters collaboration among students, faculty, and staff to promote student success.

UAA is currently preparing 18 future educators in Chevak, Alaska through a

cohort model that features both on-site and distance instruction. Over the past five years, UAF has successfully partnered with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District to quickly create two highly individualized alternative preparation programs that took advantage of the availability of short-term funding. UAS has created a secondary cohort program and a graduate program in Special Education to help current teachers of students with special needs to meet certification requirements. The success of these programs is based on the flexibility to provide instruction to students where and when the students can participate. Many potential students who could be excellent teachers cannot attend classes at a campus or on a regular academic schedule. The biggest challenge in flexible delivery is its cost, since instructor/student ratios are usually high.

The University of Alaska Education Plan describes how UA will build on its successes by increasing efforts to recruit students, expanding access to educator preparation programs, and enhancing academic and professional support to students as they complete programs and move into the profession. UA will increase the diversity of Alaska's teaching workforce by promoting public awareness of the advantages of a teaching career, ensuring accessibility for under-represented populations, increasing the number of UA education program completers who enter the profession each year, and contributing to the research base

on Alaska’s educational policies and practices, which is fundamental to enhancing P-20 education in Alaska. The three deans will submit a report annually to the UA Statewide Academic Council describing progress on initiatives and priorities.

As illustrated in the table below, the goals and priorities contained in the *UA Teacher Education Plan* reinforce those identified by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education and by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development in the *2010*

Alaska Education Plan: Building Alaska’s Future One Student at a Time.

Goals Comparison

University of Alaska Teacher Education Plan Goals	Alaska Postsecondary Education Commission Goals and Strategies	Department of Education and Early Development Alaska Education Plan
Recruit and retain more students in Education, particularly Alaska residents.	Increase public awareness of postsecondary education and training value.	Students will have access to safe schools, where they develop healthy and safe practices for life.
Increase program access through multiple delivery methods.	Increase Alaskans’ successful participation in postsecondary education.	Schools will form strong partnerships with families and communities, and will respect and embrace local cultures.
Enhance educator preparation programs in special education and in math and science teaching.	Collaborate with Alaska school districts and workforce development partners.	All students will graduate prepared for careers or postsecondary training and education.
Conduct research to identify causes and propose solutions for education challenges in Alaska.	Leverage the AlaskAdvantage grant program to provide financial aid to students with greatest financial need.	

The goals and strategies for the University of Alaska Teacher Education Plan and those of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education are clearly aligned and mutually supportive. The Department of Education and Early Development goals are designed for a P-12 public school environment and are not as clearly aligned. However, DEED goals are supported by the UA Teacher Education Plan as well as the ACPE goals and strategies.

GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL: Recruit, Retain, and Graduate More Students in Education, Particularly Alaska Residents.

Rationale

The future of Alaska requires that every child have access to quality educators dedicated to individual student success. The education profession offers rewarding career opportunities. However the general public, policy makers, parents and students are not always fully aware of the opportunities and the rewards of the profession. Recruiting top students into teaching is paramount to improving the Alaska education system.

Action: Expand recruitment, retention, and completion efforts.

Each education unit will hire or reassign staff to coordinate recruiting and retention. The coordinators will work with school districts and communities to develop more effective strategies for recruiting qualified candidates for Alaska teacher preparation programs and will help assure that each candidate who has the ability and desire to complete an education program does so. The education units will cooperate on a statewide advertising campaign to promote career opportunities in teaching.

Action: Expand recruitment, retention, and completion efforts for under-represented minority students.

The education units will build on existing efforts to attract and graduate Alaska Native students and students from other under-represented populations. Proven strategies, including recruiters working with high school teachers and counselors across the state, personalized advising for students, peer support networks, and ready access to tutoring, study groups, and other academic support, will be employed. To refine recruitment and retention strategies, UAA, UAF, and UAS will collaborate with the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (Institute of Social and Economic Research) to support faculty research on best practices. UAA, UAF, and UAS will compile, share, and build upon best practices in preparing Alaska Native educators. Alaska Pacific University will be invited to participate.

Action: Endorse Alaska educator loan repayment and incentive programs.

The UA education deans and higher administration strongly endorse strengthening Alaska educator loan repayment and incentive opportunities. We support the existing Teacher Education Loan program of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education that covers education expenses for high school graduates nominated by rural school districts. In addition, we advocate broader repayment and incentive plans to attract, prepare, and retain excellent educators for Alaska's schools.

Performance Target

Increase the total number of graduates of all education programs by 4% annually for the next five years.

Performance Target

Increase the number of under-represented minority graduates by 4% annually for the next five years.

GOAL: Increase Program Access Through Multiple Delivery Methods.

Rationale

Many of the individuals who are most likely to want a career as a rural teacher already live in rural communities. UA should meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students with flexible face-to-face and synchronous and asynchronous distance delivery options. Expanded partnerships to offer cohort-specific preparation can allow for more customized, service-oriented approaches to education. Inquiry-based learning and other active learning approaches will attract and engage students.

Action: Increase and improve program delivery options.

UAA, UAF, and UAS will continue to refine existing successful access methods such as distance delivery, intensives, summer programs, cohort models, and site-based faculty; research and test new instructional strategies that hold potential to enhance effective teaching and learning; and develop existing faculty expertise to support expanded program access.

Action: Invest in instructional technology and professional development.

UAA, UAF, and UAS will continue to invest in technology that will enhance teaching and learning, both on UA campuses and by distance, and to invest in staff and faculty professional development toward using such technology effectively. Technology training opportunities will be shared across education units.

Action: Establish the Alaska Education Consortium.

The UA education units will assume a leadership role in re-establishing a statewide, education professionals working group. The Alaska Education Consortium will provide a forum to increase institutional cooperation and share resources and expertise. Goals include increasing the number and variety of placements for student teaching. The Consortium will also foster timely exchange of key information on teacher recruitment and retention. Participants will include representatives from education entities such as the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, National Education Association – Alaska, Alaska Parent Teachers Association, the Association of Alaska School Administrators, and the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. The Consortium will be supported by the participating entities.

Product – June 2011

A technology improvement/refresh plan and a professional development plan developed collaboratively between education units and central administrations.

Performance Target

50% of all academic year 2011-2012 education courses⁴ at each campus will be accessible to non-traditional students, or those residing outside metropolitan areas, utilizing teaching and learning formats such as online, hybrid, cohort, site-based, alternative schedule, and others as needed.

Performance Target

Begin holding regular Alaska Education Consortium audio and face-to-face meetings by June 2011.

Performance Target

Meet the demand for alternative certification documented by the Alaska Education Consortium with rigorous programs based upon proven teacher preparation models.

Action: Increase alternative routes to licensure.

UAA, UAF, and UAS will expand current efforts to improve and create alternate routes to certification that build on proven teacher preparation models and maintain university rigor. Consortium partners will determine the need for alternative routes to certification.

Also, the education units will coordinate with Career and Technical programs to help prepare candidates for Type M certificates⁵, and will provide professional development for current Type M certificate holders to meet the needs of partner school districts.

GOAL: Enhance Educator Preparation Programs in High Demand Job Areas, Particularly in Special Education and in Math and Science Teaching.

Rationale

Alaska's requirements for teachers in high demand job areas are somewhat different from those in the lower 48 states. One example is Alaska's need for teachers who are qualified in more than one content area, to serve in small schools. It is imperative that the education units monitor district needs carefully to ensure we are graduating teachers to fulfill those needs. Limited resources require that UA education units, other UA disciplines, school districts, community entities, and state departments collaborate to optimize opportunities. The annual data match conducted by the Department of Education and Early Development, Department of Labor, and UA provides an excellent example of existing inter-agency collaboration to enhance accountability for individual agencies and for collaborative efforts.

Action: Improve data on the demand for teachers with specific credentials.

More complete and up-to-date information on districts' needs for specific types of educators, and the knowledge, skills, and professional characteristics they seek, is essential to inform UA planning and delivery of education programs. UAA, UAF, and UAS will work with the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research, Alaska Teacher Placement, the Department of Education and Early Development, the Department of Labor, the Alaska Education Consortium and other sources to collect, analyze and utilize data on needs for teachers.

Product - 2011

An annual report, first published in 2011, on demand for teachers in Alaska.

Action: Increase recruitment into Alaska high demand teaching job areas.

UAA, UAF, and UAS will support recruitment efforts to include projects like Future Educators of Alaska and summer camps for junior high and high school students. These will be directed toward increasing interest in Special Education, math and science teaching, and other Alaska high demand job areas.

Action: Collaborate with external entities to increase recruitment into and completion of education programs in Alaska high demand job areas.

UAA, UAF, and UAS will enhance existing—and establish new—collaborative relationships to leverage resources and expertise of Alaska education organizations that are particularly relevant to this plan. Examples include the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. This action will increase public awareness of opportunities and value of careers in education; establish partnerships with Alaska school districts and workforce development entities to recruit high school students and adult learners into careers in education; and use the AlaskAdvantage grant program to provide financial aid to students with greatest financial need.

Action: Collaborate to strengthen Special Education programs.

According to data collected through statewide supply and demand studies and from partner districts directly, school administrators rank Special Education positions as their hardest to fill. UAA, UAF, and UAS are already working together to determine common requirements and core coursework in Special Education that will apply across the system. This will allow students to obtain a Special Education credential by taking courses at any main campus or by distance and to pursue specialized studies that may not be available at their local campus.

Action: Collaborate with colleagues in UA academic disciplines to align program offerings in high demand job areas.

The education units will support students majoring in an academic field in obtaining a teaching credential. The effort will begin with math and the sciences, but can be extended to any field in which a substantial number of teaching positions are difficult to fill. The education units will work with Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Career and Technical Colleges, and other campus colleagues in creating a program alignment analysis and will develop degree and certificate completion templates to assist transfer students.

Performance Target

Increase the number of pre-college students participating in future educator experiences by 10% per year for the next five years.

Product - 2015

A memorandum of agreement with state agencies to create a data system that utilizes unique identifiers to track P-12 students through UA or vocational training programs and into careers.

Product - May 2011

UAA/UAF/UAS agreement on program requirements and core courses for Special Education.

Product - October 2011

System-wide education program alignment and transfer plans.

Performance Target

The distribution of areas of certification of graduates of UA education programs will be similar to the distribution of demand for teachers within 10 years.

GOAL: Conduct Research to Identify Causes And Propose Solutions for Education Challenges in Alaska.

Rationale

Alaska has a significant need for educational research focused on policy, instructional practice, and the links between policy and practice. In particular, research will help Alaska address the numerous challenges related to teacher recruitment and retention, high school dropout rates, financing schools, and access to education in rural areas. Beneficiaries of such research include policy makers, UA departments and programs, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the P-12 community, and the general public.

Product - June 2011

A three-year plan to enhance education faculty research capacity, including research budget commitments and a research agenda and priorities.

Product - January 2012

Review and dissemination mechanisms for research results, including a UA Online Journal of Education.

Performance Target

Meet priority research needs of the Alaska Education Consortium.

Action: Increase UA education faculty research capacity.

The UA education units will enhance their capacity to conduct research and disseminate results in specific areas important to public education in Alaska. With provosts, research officers, and education faculty, the deans will establish strategies, priorities, resources, and responsibilities to increase education research capacity at each campus. This action includes strategies such as continuing to internally fund needed faculty research and enhancing professional development opportunities related to research. The UA education units will work with the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research to match Alaska education research priorities with UA education faculty members who have the capability to conduct research on the priority issues and publish results in a timely manner.

CONCLUSION

The UAA, UAF, and UAS education units recognize that we have the opportunity and the obligation to aid the state and its school districts to address historical barriers that have kept our education system from realizing its full potential. Responding to this challenge will require alternative approaches, additional resources, and ongoing collaboration. Taken together, the initiatives described above will require all of the UA education units to address the educator shortage identified in *Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools* and to enhance the P-12 education system's effectiveness in developing Alaska's workforce, economy, and society.

Notes

1. December 2010 draft, *Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools*. Prepared for the State of Alaska In Accordance with Senate Bill 241 (2008) 25th Legislative Session, Source Chapter No. HCS CSSB 241 (HES).
2. Alexandra Hill, personal communication, 10/28/10
3. Education unit data
4. Courses, rather than course sections. Sections are offered based on demand.
5. Type M certificates are for individuals who demonstrate subject matter expertise and teaching competency as verified by the local school district, but do not have a bachelor's degree. These limited certificates can be issued in the areas of Alaska Native language or culture, military science, or vocational or technical areas. The Type M certificate is valid only in the requesting district and only in the area(s) of endorsement.