

# System Governance Report

February 2015



## Coalition of Student Leaders

Toby Wark, Chair

As the old year ends, we say farewell to 2014 and welcome in 2015 and all of the changes it brings. We, the Coalition of Student Leaders, who speak on behalf of the students of the University of Alaska, offer up our gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing regents for your hard work and time helping this university grow and adjust in a chaotic world. To the incoming regents: welcome to the University of Alaska. We are grateful for the knowledge and expertise you bring with you as we begin this New Year. We also offer our thanks to President Gamble and Vice President Thomas, for their hard work and service to the University of Alaska, and respectfully wish them prosperity as they transition to a new life. We thank you all for the time and energy put in to our educational experiences.

The Coalition of Student Leaders along with student senators are busy getting ready for the February advocacy trip to Juneau, where we will be attending legislative sessions and meeting with representatives from the various voting districts we call home in Alaska. This is a major event for the students, as well as the university, since we will be there advocating for our education, and our future as Alaskan professionals entering the workforce. We will unite as UA students on our agenda and endeavor to have a powerful impact during our legislative visit.

*Toby was born in Juneau, Alaska, and raised in Hoonah, a village about 70 miles west of Juneau. He lives in Sitka, attending the University of Alaska Southeast, working towards a business degree in management.*



## Faculty Alliance

Dr. David Valentine, Chair

The Faculty Alliance recognizes and appreciates that the UA System is under extraordinary pressures to move quickly in response to budgetary changes and in order to position UA for future success in a competitive higher education market. Governance is frequently derided for its cumbersome pace, leading some to question whether shared governance can be successful in a time of rapid change. We are convinced both that shared governance remains vital to the success of the university and that the pace of governance response can be accelerated through careful attention to ensuring greater transparency and efficiency in the processes used to move proposals through governance. We have already increased the pace at which we respond to requests for input, and will continue to work to improve that further. At the same time, however, we re-assert that careful faculty deliberation of and input to major changes to the UA System are essential to ensuring its future success.

*Dr. David Valentine is a professor of Forest Soils and chair of the Department of Forest Sciences in the School of Natural Resources and Extension Agricultural Sciences. He earned his MSc and PhD from Duke University (1984 and 1990, respectively) in ecosystem ecology. He worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow and Research Associate at the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory at Colorado State University. During that time, he was also awarded a Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Department of Energy, and worked at the Agricultural Research Service. He joined the UAF faculty in 1996.*



## Staff Alliance

### Monique Musick, Chair

On behalf of staff at the University of Alaska I wish to welcome the new members of the Board of Regents and thank you for your service to the university and the state.

This past year the Staff Alliance made it a goal to be more engaged with the Board of Regents; to have more staff involvement in meetings and university processes; to regularly promote the good work of staff throughout the system, especially how staff are helping to implement the positive change outlined in Shaping Alaska's Future; and to better highlight staff achievements. I look forward to sharing more success stories with new board members when we meet.

I also wish to thank President Gamble for his service. The hard work of a presidential search is beginning and his successor has big shoes to step into. Please know that staff and governance leaders want to be participants in the process and assist however possible. It is important to us that leadership understand the governance process and sees our organizations as partners who share in the vision and mission of the institution and the wellbeing of all the university communities.

Staff governance groups have been engaged in the review and creation of numerous new policies and regulations in the past two months. We appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this process especially when such changes, especially the introduction of a furlough policy and the change to tobacco-free smoke-free campuses, will severely impact our constituents and communities. Having a two-way avenue of communication is vital, and while there is much room for improvement, we are all doing our best to that end.

The budget prospect for the next few years is bleak. Staff are most vulnerable during times of reduction and reorganization. In the years to come, we will see staffing levels reduced and the university shrink in scope. A major cost of downsizing is the effect it has on those left behind. Morale sinks and productivity declines as anxiety increases. We lose valuable institutional knowledge. Seek staff advice before jumping to cuts when looking for savings. Engaging staff in evaluating business processes, roles and functions before eliminating positions will go far toward meeting the dual goal of reducing the budget and improving the university as will setting up processes for internal re-hire and re-placement to mitigate internal losses.

Now more than ever it will be important to engage participation in shared governance at all levels of the institution; to open our minds to innovation; to be open and transparent in our business and budget decisions; to focus on our mission as a university; and to work together to meet our student needs. Our success stories are more important now than ever as we band together to overcome the challenges before us and come out a stronger university in the end.

*Monique Musick was born and raised in Ester, Alaska. After attending ICS and later Lathrop High School, she received a bachelor's of art in journalism from UAF. She currently works for UA Public Affairs doing what she enjoys most: photography, communications and graphic design. She became involved with governance in 2009 shortly after coming to UA Statewide and has enjoyed being an active member of System Governance ever since. She values the opportunity afforded through shared governance to support co-workers, participate in policy review, advise on changes in the university and to advocate on behalf of staff throughout the system. She recently purchased her old family home in Ester and enjoys gardening, photography, motor sports, outdoor activities, prospecting, music and time with friends.*



## System Governance Council

Rachel Morse, Chair

Governance is very concerned about the pace of decision making required by the current budget environment and is working on understanding how best to participate in the flow of information such that we can appropriately speak for the groups we represent and also so that we can provide useful information, insights and counsel for the summit team and our president. We feel it is important to continue to strongly encourage the university to use and include governance in their decision-making, even if all groups are not able to weigh in on every decision.

Counsel from some groups is often significantly useful and governance can be instrumental in helping the member of their groups understand the processes at work at the university.

*Rachel Morse is originally from Louisville, Kentucky, but has lived in Alaska since 1999. She has spent the past decade working with rural communities on projects that include environmental stewardship, housing, early childhood education and other social services. Rachel served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Zimbabwe. She has a master's degree in business administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a master's degree in forestry and natural resources management from Purdue University.*