

System Governance Report

April 2015



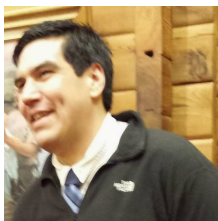
System Governance Council Rachel Morse, Chair

Thank you to the Coalition of Student Leaders who did a fabulous job of representing themselves and advocating for UA in Juneau in February. I'm proud to call you future alumni and I can't wait to see what you do with your education. Thank you to the students, alumni, other faculty/staff associations and volunteers who continue the advocacy work to educate legislators and the general public about the impacts of further cuts to the university's budget. The current level of reduction will touch every academic program and administrative unit.

Thank you to the Board of Regents, especially the new members. Your dedication, interest and focus on UA is important at this time. It was good to see all the participation, questions and work at the last BOR meeting. Thank you for the continued work to communicate as openly and quickly with system governance as possible. System governance is committed to getting the word out and participating in feedback on these rapid changes for the university. Our ability to reach all staff, faculty and students via list serve continues to be a good tool for communications. We continue to support this strong working relationship with the UA leadership and governance at each campus. As we move forward do not forget the impact a single voice can make. Everyone who reads this is represented by individuals in Juneau with whom the fate of the university's budget rests. Please do your part and make your voice heard this session.

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.

The System Governance Council consists of the leaders from Faculty Alliance, Staff Alliance, and Coalition of Student Leaders and includes the alumni directors from the three UA universities. The Council provides the setting for collaboration on University of Alaska systemwide issues.



Coalition of Student Leaders. Toby Wark, Chair

We, the student body representatives, came together on February 21-24 in Juneau and advocated on behalf of and in the best interest of the university. We met many times each day during our visit to the capitol to ask the legislators for continued support. We spoke with experience and passion about the needs we have as students, about the needs of our peers, our teachers, and our campuses. We chose the following talking points to share with legislators:

- Support of the Governor's proposed budget
- Support for unallocated funding
- Continued support for deferred maintenance
- Support for the president's initiative: the Sovereignty Fund

The advocacy trip seemed to go very well considering the financial concerns this year. The Coalition has already started planning for next year's event. We thank you for supporting our university advocacy. We appreciate your confidence in our ability to make a difference in the future of this great institution of higher education.

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.

The Coalition of Student Leaders consists of student government representatives from the University of Alaska campuses and portrays the diverse scope of student affairs and needs. The Coalition provides a forum for student expression while fostering dialogue with faculty, staff, administration, state legislature and communities of Alaska. The Coalition promotes the educational needs, general welfare and rights of all University of Alaska students, and functions as an advisory group to the UA president and Statewide administration on student issues.



Faculty Alliance
Dr. David Valentine, Chair

In this report we cover the following: Progress toward meeting the charges given to the faculty by the BOR at its April 2014 meeting concerning (1) Development of a common calendar, (2) Alignment of math and English General Education Requirements (GER), and (3) Development of a plan to align all other GERs. We also report on the major outcomes of the February 2015 Faculty Alliance Retreat.

Appointed and charged by the Faculty Alliance and led by Saichi Oba, the Common Calendar Task Force has recommended alignment among the three universities along eight major dimensions starting in fall 2016. Implementing these changes necessitates many other changes within the university system, has potentially broad impacts on external entities (e.g., airlines, public schools), and would require changes to already published information. If done hurriedly and without sufficient care, these could have substantial negative impacts on students. The Faculty Alliance therefore supports the recommendation of the Task Force to focus on implementing the common calendar well, rather than quickly.

Three GER Task Forces have been appointed and charged by the Faculty Alliance to align math GERs, align English GERs, and develop a strategic plan to revise, update and coordinate the remaining GERs across the three universities.

Led by UAA Faculty Senate Past-President Mark Fitch, the Math GER Task Force has nearly completed its work. Specifically, it reported the following outcomes:

- UAS, UAA and UAF have submitted the course number, name, description and outcomes changes to their curriculum processes. All three expect the changes to be in place for the fall 2015 semester.

- Placement test changes include removal of ACT and SAT as placement tools for mathematics starting in the fall 2015 semester. Both tests may be used for entrance in baccalaureate degrees of course.
- All three universities are working on advertising these changes to students, faculty, and staff to reduce the degree of that may ensue.
- All five departments at all three universities have spent significant time discussing the changes, completing the curriculum documents, and advertising the changes. Many more hours of explaining the changes are expected once the catalogs are updated.

Work on the English GER alignment is more complex due to the required coordination with other academic programs. UAA English Department Chair, Dan Kline, is leading the English GER Alignment Task Force.

The GER Coordination Task Force has begun its work to align the remainder of the GERs across the three universities, again under the leadership of Dan Kline. UAA and UAS both have “menu” GER systems in which students choose from approved lists of courses to fill out their GERs. UAF has a core curriculum in which some courses are prescribed and some are chosen from a menu. A GER revision effort was well underway at UAF, which would have moved UAF into more of a “menu” system oriented around reaching a set of student learning outcomes. A new GER program was proposed by a UAF faculty committee in March 2014. It was stalled following the April 2014 BOR resolution concerning GER alignment as UAF faculty realized that the proposed revisions would have to be aligned before being adopted.

The Faculty Alliance has decided to offer an addendum to the ASPRA-generated definition of post-secondary career and life readiness; our addendum would be more tightly focused on helping incoming students know specifically what we believe are the characteristics necessary for success in the University of Alaska system. We have requested support for Dayna DeFeo at ISER to produce a definition based on her existing work.

The Faculty Alliance was asked for its recommendations concerning Minimum Baccalaureate Admissions Standards for inclusion in university regulations. We have agreed to recommend using the UAA admissions standards as the system-wide floor with language explicitly allowing each university to specify more, but not less, stringent admissions standards. This proposed recommendation will be forwarded to the UAF and UAS faculty senates for approval.

The frequency of requests and directives to Faculty Alliance has increased significantly over the past year, likely a consequence of the formation of the Summit Team and its efforts to stimulate more rapid progress on statewide issues. These have added greatly to Faculty Alliance activities, forcing us to find ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness. We have agreed that next year’s Faculty Alliance will meet twice per month in order to facilitate timelier transmittal of issues to and from the various Faculty Senates. We have agreed to seek appointment of a faculty member chosen by the Faculty Alliance to the Summit Team, and have agreed to seek increased interactions with both the Summit Team and the Board of Regents, particularly through alignment of Alliance retreats with Board of Regents meetings.

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.

Faculty Alliance is the faculty voice in matters affecting the general welfare of the University of Alaska system and its educational programs.



Staff Alliance

Monique Musick, Chair

While it is still March, all eyes are on the Alaska Legislature as we wait to see just how deep of a cut the university will take in FY16. With numbers changing on a daily basis, and proposed cuts ranging from \$9.5 to \$20 million dollars, it is easy to understand why a looming uneasiness overarches everything. What we do know is that cost-cutting measures and efficiencies alone will not be enough, and people will be cut.

Staff feel especially vulnerable to personnel cuts. As non-represented employees, staff do not have the protections of a collective bargaining agreement. Administrative services will likely be eliminated before academic programs, which leaves staff the most likely candidates for elimination. This has a chilling effect on staff morale. There is no easy solution to that, but again and again we hear that staff just want to know what is happening and when, and as staff leaders we are doing our best to facilitate those discussions, answer questions and develop innovative alternatives.

Staff Alliance continues to be engulfed in policy and regulation change review. Internal budgeting needs, external compliance obligations and the impact of ever advancing technological alternatives have all generated necessary change to university policy and regulation. Progress has been made in our ability to facilitate two-way dialogues, but there are still concerning gaps in process protocol.

Despite an extremely short review period, we were able to respond thoughtfully and thoroughly to proposed layoff regulation changes. Many of our suggestions were accepted, and for those that were not, we received a written explanation of why. It was open and transparent and resulted in a better solution and well-informed staff.

For the newly introduced furlough policy a systemwide working group was formed to collaboratively develop regulations. The group met regularly, established limits and definitions, discussed must-haves and protections for employees. The involvement was positive and in the end representatives felt like they played a big part in crafting something that met staff needs. Imagine the frustration when the final regulation was passed without many of those protections or limits, and was signed and enacted without a final review or explanation of changes. How does this encourage participation over reaction? We will continue to insist on active involvement AND the opportunity to review and respond to regulation and policy changes before they are enacted.

One historic contribution of Staff Alliance is a recommendation from the Compensation Committee regarding cost of living adjustments during the budget development process. The work of that committee this year will not be easy. On the one side we know that budgets are

being cut and will likely continue to be cut in coming years. There is a temptation to resist any form of increases in an attempt to save as many positions as possible. On the other hand, we must be able to retain and attract quality staff. We cannot become a stronger university with weaker people. We cannot lose a valued resource: the skills and knowledge of the people who work for this university. Finding that balance will be difficult and the committee is going to have hard work ahead.

Our health care committees face a similar challenge. We must react to rising health care costs, the impact of the Affordable Care Act and the projected losses associated with a smaller pool of employees due to layoffs and non-renewal of term and temporary employees. Early projections have our health plan contributions increasing by as much as 45% next year alone. Promoting health and wellness, preventative medicine and regular examinations is more important than ever, but even more difficult when the stress and uncertainty of the current funding climate promotes anxiety and reduces motivation. Keeping costs down and health up is another huge challenge.

Staff Alliance is reaching out to staff across the system soliciting ideas and looking for examples of efficiency and innovation to share. We are conducting a survey of all staff to gauge the level of interest in voluntary contract reductions to help offset costs and reduce the necessity of furloughs and layoffs. We are offering technical assistance to the Common Calendar Committee and volunteers for smoke-free and tobacco-free campus task forces. We are engaged and active in finding solutions to our challenges and in creating a stronger university.

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.

Staff Alliance serves the classified and administrative, professional and technical staff throughout the University of Alaska system.