

**Supplement**  
**to**  
**Debriefing Report: Review of the Land-Grant Mission**  
**University of Alaska – Fairbanks\***

BASED ON A SITE VISIT CONDUCTED OCTOBER 21-26, 2007

December 5, 2007  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service  
Washington, DC 20250

\* This Supplement is meant to bring forward other observations and recommendations of the Review Team for consideration by UAF and the University of Alaska System. While the Debriefing Report stands on its own, the Supplement should be read in the context of the Debriefing Report.

**Supplement  
to  
Debriefing Report: Review of the Land-Grant Mission,  
University of Alaska – Fairbanks**

**Context**

The observations and recommendations presented in this Supplement and the Debriefing Report: Review of the Land-Grant Mission, University of Alaska – Fairbanks are based on a site visit to several locations in Alaska over the period October 21-26, 2007. The Debriefing Report was delivered to University of Alaska – Fairbanks on November 1, 2007, and subsequently web-posted on the UAF website. This Supplement and the Debriefing Report are based on extensive written material provided to the Review Team and five days of intensive interviews and visits. The team focused its recommendations on a structural framework and avoided prescriptive solutions. These recommendations, and potential implementation scenarios, should be fully vetted by stakeholders within and external to the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. After the vetting process, implementation decisions should be announced on a timely basis and the rationale for the decisions should be shared with all concerned stakeholders.

The Debriefing Report directly addresses the central purpose of the review, which is where to locate the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) within the UAF administrative structure to enhance the Land-Grant mission; contribute to the success, prosperity, and repute of the University of Alaska System; and positively benefit the people of the state. In the Debriefing Report, the Review Team recommended that the Cooperative Extension Service be positioned within the Provost's Office with the title of "Vice Provost of Extension and Outreach." This position also serves as the Director of CES. Positioning the leadership of Extension in this way removes it from the constraints of being within a single college and elevates Extension administration to an administrative level that will allow the leadership to grow Extension and Outreach across the land-grant campus, bringing all that the land-grant university has to offer to the citizens of Alaska.

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**Logistics**

In advance of the October 21-26, 2007 site visit, the Review Team was provided with a self-study document and with an extensive set of background and reference materials. The self-study and materials were prepared by UAF. Other documents and materials were provided on site, at the request of the Review Team.

Vice Chancellor Poole, Dean Lewis, and Interim Cooperative Extension Director Pinney arranged an informative five-day schedule for the reviewers. Because of the breadth of the review, the itinerary included day visits by groupings of Review Team members. The Bethel visit was to meet with community stakeholders and Cooperative Extension Service staff. The Palmer visit was to meet with School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences (SNRAS) and Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (AFES) faculty, the Palmer District CES faculty and staff, and the Alaska Division of Agriculture Director and the leader of its Plant Materials Center, and to tour the Matanuska Experiment Farm. The Delta Junction visit was to meet with Delta stakeholders and tour agricultural areas. A day-long visit in Fairbanks included meetings with leaders for sustainable communities, faculty housed at the Anchorage office, and a teleconference with Southeast stakeholders.

Much time was spent in listening sessions presented by faculty, administrators, and stakeholder groups. An introductory meeting was held on Sunday, October 21, with Vice Chancellor Poole and with Dr. Mike Sfraga, Director of the University of Alaska Geography Program. Meetings were also held with Dr. Mark Hamilton, President, University of Alaska System; Dr. Steve Jones, UAF chancellor; Dr. Susan Henricks, Provost for Academic Affairs; and Dr. Bernice Joseph, Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community, and Native Education.

The University of Alaska System is headed by the President and Chancellors for the individual universities at Anchorage, Fairbanks and Southeast. Currently, CES reports to the Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community, and Native Education.

On the final morning of the review, the Review Team made an oral presentation on the preliminary findings and recommendations to Jones, Poole, Lewis, and Pinney. A draft, written version of the oral presentation was left with the group and the final report, *Debriefing Report: Review of the Land-Grant Mission, University of Alaska – Fairbanks*, was delivered to Vice Chancellor Poole on November 1, 2007, and subsequently web-posted at UAF.

### Public Service / Cooperative Extension Service

The 1996 review of the School of Agriculture and Land Resources Management noted that all faculty have a public service responsibility, which in many ways amplifies the service program presence in the state without a direct or close working relationship with Cooperative Extension. There is a strong sense of obligation by faculty to transfer technology from research to clientele, engaging Cooperative Extension in varying degrees, without any formal funding from Smith-Lever or a State match for that purpose. Reviewers stated, “Without debating the rationale for the separation of the functions of the Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension, there should be a re-examination of the appropriateness of the separation. Those relationships should be strengthened with the objective being to develop joint appointments and, as the opportunity arises, joining Cooperative Extension with the Experiment Station...while maintaining their identity and

funding.” The 1991 review of the Department of Plant and Animal Sciences also noted the separation between the School of Agriculture and Land Resources Management and Cooperative Extension, stating “Combining the research and agricultural extension programs may not be feasible in the near future; however, methods to better coordinate the agricultural programs should be pursued.”

Pointing to the two prior reviews and the more recent history of circumstances which led to this current review, the Review Team recognizes that it is imperative that the separation of CES from academic and research programs be immediately resolved. The resolution must be done in ways which promote professional growth, align with strategic planning, and evoke a high sense of collaborative mission and purpose.

It is clear to the Review Team that CES should not remain under the Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community, and Native Education (RCNE). There appears to be very little complementarity between CES and RCNE, and no apparent interest in building complementarity. CES perceives itself without voice or advocacy with UAF administration because the administration is viewed as having little or no knowledge of CES programs or constituency, and because of a widespread feeling of isolation and lack of communication. This perceived lack of communication is the root cause of low morale, rampant rumors, and distrust observed in some of the CES units. CES faculty and staff wonder if the UAF administration knows or cares about them.

The sense of isolation and barrier to communication is exemplified by the administration’s decision to remove the CES Director and then remove the CES Assistant Director without, according to many CES staff and faculty, any explanation or consultation. The administration’s view is that CES leadership was ineffective. The Review Team heard many affirmations by CES staff and faculty of the former CES Director’s affinity for programs, comradery, and interpersonal skills. Removal of the Director and Assistant Director confirmed distrust for the administration, made many CES staff and faculty concerned for their own jobs, and did not solve the problem...and actually made the situation worse. Another example of the communication issue is the large extent to which CES faculty and staff members were unaware of the fiscal year 2009 budget shortfalls facing CES and facing the SNRAS. CES was basically unaware and therefore uninvolved in the discussion, decision, and leadership on how to address the impending shortfalls. In contrast, the SNRAS faculty and staff members were fully aware of their shortfall and that of CES.

The UAF administration then announced that CES as a whole would be moved to the School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences (SNRAS). Again, this was done as a fiat with no consultation with and little explanation to either CES or SNRAS. The outcry was heated and led to the CES Advisory Board being engaged to review the situation and provide recommendations to UAF.

The CES Advisory Board recommended that CES be raised to a new Vice Chancellor position. The administration balked at this recommendation and the Review Team sees little advantage and many obstacles to creating another Vice Chancellor position.

However, the Review Team feels strongly that CES needs to be integrated into the UAF system, and not set aside again. The Review Team also feels strongly that the CES Advisory Board role should be clarified, especially regarding what appears to be the assumption that its role is to function as a board of directors, rather than a body which provides advice.

The Review Team notes that there is broad consensus by faculty and staff in CES and SNRAS that there would not be a good fit in moving CES into SNRAS. There are many CES programs in its four areas (4-H, agriculture, natural resources and conservation, home and family) that would not have a suitable “home” in SNRAS. While CES runs local programs responding to local citizen requests, there is little interaction with UAF faculty and specialists. There are a few joint appointments between SNRAS and CES. Many more are needed, and are recommended by the Review Team. There are additional issues with joint appointments relative to scholarship and to promotion and tenure criteria for faculty, whether with SNRAS or other UAF colleges and schools.

An organizational structure is desired which will incorporate all of CES into the mainstream of the university, while recognizing the breadth of its disciplines. CES should be integral to the UAF academic enterprise in all aspects of engagement and outreach, but not be that function for all of the university. UA System-wide engagement in the spirit of the Kellogg Commission report, “The Engaged Institution,” is encouraged by the Review Team. Such engagement creates opportunity to showcase how the University of Alaska serves the state, and how the University can more effectively employ the existing CES system of the state.

Because CES delivers programs needed by people in rural and urban settings throughout Alaska, it views itself as the “face to the state” for the University. However, CES is not branding/marketing itself back to UAF. The Review Team recommends that CES in its new position in the UAF administration engage in an overt partnership between CES and the UA System to enhance the reputation and prestige of the UA System with the people of the state and with the state legislature.

## School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

Joint appointments between research/teaching and Extension are few (3-4 faculty), but these give the faculty a formal, direct link between the research/academic unit and the extension function. Research conducted by CES is thought of as preparing largely applied research/discovery information for field/clientele on-the-ground needs. The Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, embedded in the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, is an excellent and high functioning example of research and outreach co-functioning.

SNRAS maintains a cohesive and dedicated faculty and staff who address a relatively narrow range of research topics and expertise which are tailored to Alaska. Forestry, horticulture, soils, high value vegetable crops, and wood products are a few examples.

Usually faculty carry research and teaching split appointments, and also carry an outreach appointment. The latter outreach function would be very valuable in building-out the recommended Vice Provost position for Extension and Outreach.

There are some programs within SNRAS where there is a “good” fit with CES, such as natural resources management, geography, and soils. These areas are or would be welcome for joint appointments. Policy, standards, valuation, and expectation for scholarship and promotion/tenure need to be worked out.

SNRAS faculty have the perception the CES is too broad in mission and not doing cutting edge work, and consequently promotion and tenure metrics do not fit. The Review Team recommends that CES be located in the UAF structure where scholarship and faculty/staff quality for CES can be appropriately valued and raised to be comparable to those of the SNRAS. Metrics developed by NASULGC-CECEPS or the Carnegie Foundation for the designation of an ‘Engaged Institution’ should be examined.

Regarding the land-grant mission, SNRAS emphasis on natural resources is laudable because it represents the interest of the people of Alaska. Natural resources programming, research, education, and outreach are consistent with the land-grant mission.

Limited emphasis on traditional agriculture is perfectly acceptable for Alaska. The Review Team notes that employers look outside Alaska to hire staff with relevant agricultural degrees. This is the case for the Division of Agriculture in the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

The Review Team notes with some concern that natural resources research and science addressing current issues in the realm of the boreal/subarctic environment should be much more visible. Alaska is uniquely situated to address heuristic topics, such as global change, ecosystem services, and bioenergy. More attention should be paid to these broad topics by SNRAS, and to their integration into the curricula for students’ education.

The Review Team also notes that the SNRAS faculty and staff are scattered across several locations on the UAF campus. The Review Team recommends that a concerted planning effort be undertaken to consolidate SNRAS in a single location. This is a simple means to creating synergy and a higher functioning faculty.

## Conclusion

The potential for the Land-Grant in Alaska is great. The challenges are many. Land-Grant universities across the country are in various stages of redesigning their teaching, research, and outreach/extension to be more productively involved with their communities. This is a fundamental responsibility to the people, both local and global, to address actual, relevant needs, bringing tangible benefits to the people, to businesses, and

to government. It is an outcome from blending research with learning opportunities, and brings to bear the intellectual resources of the university. Strong visionary leadership will make a difference. Change and communication must occur on many levels in the university. Participation and inclusion in the processes of change must be welcomed.

Dan Kugler  
Review Team Leader  
Deputy Administrator, Natural Resources and Environment  
USDA- CSREES  
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## The Review Team

The Review Team was assembled based on their professional, managerial and administrative experience, credibility, vision, and knowledge of the land grant university system and its institutions. The Review Team was selected in part from individuals recommended by UAF and in part by the Review Team leader working in consultation with UAF Vice Chancellor Jake Poole.

The Review Team members were:

Dr. Dan Kugler, Review Team leader  
Deputy Administrator  
Natural Resources and Environment  
USDA-Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service  
Ag Box 2210  
Washington, DC 20250-2210

Dr. Nancy Bull  
Associate Dean, Outreach and Public Service  
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources  
University of Connecticut  
1376 Storrs Road U-4134  
Storrs, CT 06269-4134

Dr. Andrew Hashimoto  
Dean and Director  
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources  
University of Hawaii at Manoa  
Honolulu, HI 96822

Dr. Marc Johnson  
Dean, College of Agriculture Sciences  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1101

Dr. Jack Payne  
Vice President-Extension & Outreach  
Iowa State University  
2150 Beardshear Hall  
Ames, IA 50011-2046