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**RENEWING THE COVENANT:
REPOSITIONING THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS
AS THE STATE'S LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY
TO BETTER SERVE THE CHANGING NEEDS
OF ALASKA'S PEOPLE
AND THEIR COMMUNITIES**

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Beginning with the creation of Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in 1917 as Alaska's land-grant college by the Territory of Alaska, and in keeping with the provisions and intent of the nation's land-grant legislation, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) has worked to relate its teaching, research, and extension/outreach programs to the changing educational and economic development needs of Alaska's people and their communities. During its 85-year history, UAF's development and maturation has been influenced by changes that have occurred in Alaska's economy and its expanded system of publicly supported higher education that followed statehood in 1959. It was during the early years of statehood and a strong, growing state economy that two additional publicly supported four-year campuses in Alaska were formed, first in Anchorage and later in Juneau. Additionally, twelve community colleges were established and strategically located throughout the vast land area of the state, extending from Ketchikan in the southeast panhandle to Kotzebue in the northwest above the Arctic circle. However, in the mid-1980s, Alaska's economy was severely impacted by the drastic reduction of world oil prices which, in turn, negatively impacted the state's budget allocation for higher education. In 1986, the University of Alaska's budget was reduced 15 percent. In response to reduced state funds, the University's Board of Regents merged Alaska's loose confederation of publicly supported colleges and universities, including its flagship and land-grant university, UAF, into the University of Alaska system, led by a President. Reporting to the President of this merged system are the chancellors of the three major campuses, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Alaska Anchorage

(UAA), and University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) in Juneau, with the former twelve community colleges reporting through these three major campuses.

Although a part of the University of Alaska system, UAF has maintained its identity and status as Alaska's land-grant university. Its uniqueness as Alaska's land-grant university is rooted in the nation's historic land-grant college legislation Acts (i.e., the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, Hatch Act of 1887, and Smith-Lever Act of 1914). The Morrill Act of 1862 authorized the establishment of a college in each state and, in 1890, a second college for African-Americans in the 16 southern states. These colleges were significant in that they were established to teach subjects previously ignored by the nation's public and private institutions of higher education, namely agriculture and the mechanical arts. In accordance with the Morrill Acts, Congress allocated public federal land grants to each state. The sale of these lands provided the initial funds needed to establish a college that was then dubbed the state's *land-grant* college or university. The scope of the programs offered by these land-grant colleges and universities was expanded with the passage of the Hatch Act in 1887 that provided public funds for research in the form of experiment stations. The scope of the programs was further expanded a few years later with the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 that provided funds for a strong extension/outreach function, now known as Cooperative Extension. It was out of this historical national legislation and in response to the needs expressed by Alaskans for higher education that the Territorial Government of Alaska in 1917 created the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, later to be designated the University of Alaska in 1935 and University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in 1986.

Importantly, the historic land-grant legislative Acts imply that UAF's "campus" is, in fact, the entire state of Alaska, thus presenting a persuasive argument that its constituents include all of the residents of Alaska. These Acts further designate UAF as a research university and mandate that UAF extend its knowledge base and resources to all the state's residents. During the latter part of the 20th century, UAF's status was further elevated when it was also designated as a sea-grant and space-grant university, thus distinguishing itself as one of the nation's 13 land-grant universities that are also land, sea, and space grant universities. Moreover, UAF has the distinction of being the nation's northernmost land, sea, and space grant university. So, in addition to its historic roots, UAF's uniqueness among its sister institutions in the University of Alaska system is accentuated by its designations and its legally mandated tripartite functions of teaching (Morrill Act of 1862), research (Hatch Act of 1887), and extension/outreach (Smith-Lever Act of 1914).

UAF in the 21st century and forces impacting its future role

As the 21st century begins, UAF is celebrating more than 85 years of higher education and service to Alaska, the nation, and the world community. In the more than eight decades since its founding, UAF has played a major role in the economic development, growth, and diversification of Alaska, from Alaska's territory days to its statehood and into the 21st century. Currently, UAF serves 190 communities through its education, research, and extension/outreach programs. Although UAF's continuing impact in improving the state's economy and quality of life for Alaskans is celebratory, it is at a crossroads in its continuing development. UAF, along with the nation's other 58

land-grant institutions designated by the 1862 Morrill Act, the 17 historically black institutions assigned land-grant status in 1890, and 29 tribal colleges designated in 1994 as land-grant colleges, together are being challenged by the nation's people, local, state, and national levels of government, and a sizeable number of their own administrators and faculty to reclaim and renew their missions and return to their historic roots. The challenges are that land-grant colleges and universities need to become 1) more accessible to a wider range of students; 2) more learner focused; 3) more concerned about and engaged in applied research to discover information that can be used to help solve real life problems; and 4) more engaged in partnerships with people, their leaders, and community organizations and agencies to identify and resolve critical issues.

The gradual bureaucratization of the organization and management of land-grant universities that has occurred during their 140-year history, their subconscious desire to be like traditional universities, and their allegedly slow response to accelerating societal changes present a compelling case for these unique institutions that were born out of a need to make education accessible to the working class to reassess their missions in order to preserve their best aspects while more effectively responding to, and directing their resources towards, future needs. To do so, it is crucial that the mission of land-grant universities is understood and appreciated by the American public, and that misconceptions about their importance to society are overcome. Many people are not familiar with the term *land-grant* to describe a university in their state and do not make a distinction between their state's land-grant university and other public universities in their respective states. Paralleling this lack of understanding of the land-grant university by the public is the limited knowledge about and commitment to the vision of the land-

grant university by a sizeable number of its own administrators, faculty, support staff and, significantly, members of its governing board.

Compounding the lack of understanding about the mission of land-grant universities and the erosion of the distinctiveness of their missions compared with other publicly supported higher education institutions, is the declining budgetary support at both state and national levels. State and national budget allocations suggest that state legislatures and the US Congress have little appreciation of the contributions of these institutions. Much of the budgetary support is flat or declining, particularly for research and extension/outreach missions. While fluctuations in the economy may account for some of the declining budgetary support, there is reason to speculate that the far-reaching impact of land-grant university programs on the national and states' economies and, hence, on people's quality of life is not well understood or valued by elected state and national officials.

Recognizing these and other challenges confronting the future role of land-grant universities in renewing their missions and becoming more responsive to the accelerating rate of change that is currently driving America, in 1994 the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) established the acclaimed Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities. The Commission, financed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, included 25 current and former Presidents of state universities and land-grant colleges. The Commission's charge was to define the future direction of land-grant universities and to recommend an action agenda. In response to this charge, the Kellogg Commission concluded that land-grant universities must expand their traditional approach of outreach and service to include

what the Commission defines as *engagement*. Indeed, land-grant universities must renew and reposition themselves to become fully engaged institutions. The Commission declares, “A full recovery of the deepest roots of land-grant universities will require these institutions to rework their traditional concepts of teaching, research, and service into new visions emphasizing learning, discovery, and engagement.” (p. 31)

Out of deliberations that spanned five years, the Commission produced six thought-provoking reports. The dominant and convincing theme that transcended all of the reports was the clarion call for land-grant universities to return to their “deepest roots” by becoming engaged land-grant universities. Several reasons were advanced in building the Commission’s case for land-grant universities to embrace and commit to the concept and spirit of engagement.

First, the Commission believes there is growing frustration among the American people, many of whom perceive that land-grant universities have lost touch with the people and are unresponsive to the multitude of problems and issues with which society is confronted. This frustration seems to be associated with the idea of an insular orientation that the nation’s land-grant universities are alleged to have acquired during the past two to three decades. The Commission reports that the public’s perception is that land-grant universities, despite their resources and expertise, are not oriented toward bringing these benefits to bear in a coherent way on everyday problems and issues with which people from all walks of life are confronted. Perceptions held by significant numbers of Americans and their leaders are that land-grant universities’ administrators and faculty are aloof and lack an understanding of and commitment to the mission of the land-grant university. In a word, they are indifferent and possess self-serving agendas.

Further, many administrators and faculty are poorly prepared to function as leaders and, hence, lack the knowledge and skills as well as motivation to take the initiative in forming new or becoming a part of existing partnerships with the people to identify and resolve public issues and problems.

Secondly, the Commission as well as other influential state and national leaders believe that engagement is not only crucial to land-grant universities in fulfilling their extension/outreach mission, but also enriching their traditional on-campus educational and research missions. For example, engagement is an excellent means for creating experiential learning opportunities for students. This increasingly popular and successful concept, referred to as *service learning*, greatly enriches learning experiences by integrating real life work experience into traditional courses to help students develop skills that are difficult to teach in the classroom.

Thirdly, and a concluding and compelling reason that supports the Commission's call for land-grant universities to become engaged institutions is that the research agenda of the nation has shifted to issues of the economy. Engaging the community, region, and even the state in strengthening and expanding the local, regional, and state economies has taken on increased significance. Therefore, land-grant universities must rethink their relationships with communities, regions, and the state and become more proactive in working with their respective leadership to improve their economies and, hence, quality of life for their people.

Engagement, as envisioned by the Commission, goes well beyond extension, conventional outreach, and even most conceptions of public service as presently practiced by land-grant universities. By engagement, the Commission envisions partnerships, two-

way streets defined by mutual respect among the partners for ideas that each brings to the table. According to the Commission, in order to be an engaged land-grant university, the institution must:

- Respond effectively to the needs of current and future students, thus recognizing that such needs have changed drastically over past decades.
- Enrich students' social and intellectual development by bringing research and discovery into the curriculum and offering practical opportunities for students to prepare for the world they will enter.
- Expand its research agenda to include applied research that focuses on the discovery of knowledge in solving real societal problems and issues.
- Put its rich knowledge base and abundance of resources to work on the problems faced by the people and their communities.

To accomplish these ends, the engaged land-grant university must recognize and accept that its current and evolving student body is considerably different from its historically traditional student body that for the most part was full-time and predominantly white male. The current student body is diverse and is characterized by part-time, predominantly female, older, and often employed students. Importantly, the engaged land-grant university must become more accessible to students. Accessibility includes making undergraduate education available to students who represent socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, and age diversity. Further, the land-grant university must adopt and commit to service learning; that is, it must prepare students for life challenges by integrating community and academic experience. It is of paramount importance that

the engaged land-grant university renew its commitment to the idea that the creation, translation, and application of knowledge to solving problems and promoting the well-being of humankind is perhaps the most important contribution that it can make to society. The engaged land-grant university is obligated to contribute to solutions of pressing problems, building on its comparative advantages such as its public service tradition, effective outreach infrastructure, continuous experience in basic and applied research, and a history of practical and effective education of the nation's people.

UAF's quest to become a more engaged land-grant university.

UAF has embraced and is committed to the concept and spirit of what the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities has defined as an engaged land-grant university. UAF has several initiatives underway to achieve this end. One noteworthy initiative is the university's Higher Education Project entitled, *The Extended University: A Continuing Collaboration between the College of Rural Alaska Extended Campuses and the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service*. Funded by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, the Higher Education Project is designed to model, demonstrate, and facilitate collaboration between UAF's College of Rural Alaska Extended Campuses and the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service and bring to bear their combined resources in developing and empowering the people who reside in Alaska's rural regions. Its program is framed to respond purposefully to the larger mission of UAF as an engaged land-grant university.

The goals of the Higher Education Project are to 1) facilitate a process that encourages the people, their leaders, and stakeholders in each of the rural regions served

by UAF to come together as a regional quasi-unified group (i.e., an alliance/consortium) and to design and implement a comprehensive needs assessment of the educational, economic development, and health-related needs of the people residing in their respective region; 2) partner with and provide technical assistance to these regional groups of leaders and stakeholders in interpreting the findings of their needs assessments and designing and implementing collaborative programs that respond to the designated needs; and 3) connect and facilitate UAF's involvement in these assessed needs-driven programs in each of the regions by bringing to bear the University's rich knowledge base and abundant resources. The achievement of these goals accents the concepts and change strategies that collectively give meaning to engagement, including partnerships, coalitions, and collaborative programming.

During its three years of existence, the Higher Education Project has contributed to the ongoing process of UAF becoming a more engaged land-grant university. This progress is evident in themes and behaviors that are impacting UAF's response to strengthening its posture as an engaged land-grant university. These themes, with supporting examples of verification and practice, are described as follows.

1. Spirit of Engagement. The Higher Education Project has engendered a spirit of engagement within the UAF community. This spirit is manifest in behaviors and actions of the University administration, faculty, and support staff in their collective efforts to align and connect more definitively with the more than 600,000 Alaskans and other stakeholders groups that wield considerable influence in the governance of the State. These stakeholders include the Governor, Legislature, and the several departments of

government. Indeed, this spirit of engagement that encourages UAF as Alaska's land-grant university to become more relevant and responsive to the needs of Alaskans from all walks of life is now a built-in part of UAF faculty proposals that seek external funds. Such proposals request funds from government agencies and private groups such as the National Science Foundation, Institute of Health, US Space Agency, etc. These state and national agencies as well as private benefactors are insisting that proposals submitted in response to RFPs include a plan for disseminating the findings and products generated. Furthermore, the Higher Education Project has been a catalyst for sponsoring nationally recognized speakers on engagement at campus functions and building the case for informed discourse with UAF leaders about the need for UAF to undergo a major transformation and become an engaged land-grant university.

One of the most visible and perhaps most important actions taken by the Higher Education Project is the support that it has given to the University of Alaska Faculty Alliance in its endorsement of a university-wide dialogue among faculty regarding the engaged university concept. Since this endorsement, representatives from the three major campuses of the University of Alaska system have met several times to frame their conversation. They have written a draft statement to describe their vision of an Engaged University Conversation Group. This group decided that one of its first tasks was to develop a process for compiling an inventory of engaged activities within the University of Alaska system. This university-wide inventory is in process. It is out of this system-wide Conversation Group that participating UAF faculty formed an ad hoc UAF Engagement and Outreach Committee. This committee, under the leadership of the Chair of the UAF Faculty Senate, developed and conducted a survey to inventory the

engagement activities of UAF faculty. The responses from the faculty to the survey were good. Selected responses of the faculty indicate that engagement is practiced in many ways:

- A service-learning project in which an undergraduate student and his professor collaborate with village elders in planning and conducting a language institute for a native Alaska group in rural Alaska.
- A graduate research project in which UAF's School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences is partnering with the USGC-Alaska Science Center and International Pacific Halibut Commission to facilitate the research of a Ph.D. student that focuses on movement patterns, spawning site selections, and associated physical oceanography of Pacific halibut in the Bering Sea using pop-up archival transmitting.
- A demonstration of agroforestry in southeast Alaska that combines the management of woody perennials on the same land with plant and animal production; this demonstration showcases beneficial economic and ecological interactions.
- An annual teacher inservice for elementary and secondary education teachers participating in the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service's 4-H Fisheries, Natural Resources, and Youth Program.
- A master gardeners volunteer program and workshop series that prepares volunteers for teaching basic concepts and practices of gardening, pest management, lawn care, and landscaping.

- A food product development program that focuses on the needs of aspiring food producers.
- Community-based education programs planned and implemented with village elders that address village drinking water and nutrition issues.
- Collaborative seafood partnership programs involving UAF and several seafood stakeholder groups that teach best practices in the regional marketing of salmon.
- Tourism program involving UAF, the Alaska Tourism Office, and the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development that emphasizes tourism as a major part of the state's economy and that teaches best practices critical to the health and continued growth of tourism in Alaska.
- Workforce development programs involving UAF's CRA, Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, Alaska Miners' Association, and Delta Mines Training Center that provide technical training for workers in the mining and mineral exploration industries.

These programs indicate that UAF's engagement extend across Alaska. They include the harvesting, processing, and marketing of seafood; the production, conservation, harvesting, and marketing of the state's timber and forest products; enriching and expanding the state's growing tourism industry; preparing the workforce for Alaska's mining and mineral industries; and the sharing of research-based information and teaching of best practices that enhance the safety, health, and well-being of human life.

These findings, along with other insights about engagement being generated by the ad hoc UAF Engagement and Outreach Committee, are helping to ignite, among UAF faculty, a spirit of renewed commitment to engagement and fulfillment of UAF's

mission as the state's land-grant university. This ad hoc committee is receiving strong support from UAF faculty leaders and the University of Alaska Faculty Alliance on Engagement and Outreach.

2. Initiating and Implementing a Collaborative Culture of Partnership. The Higher Education Project has provided the impetus for initiating and energizing a collaborative culture of partnership across the UAF campus. This collaborative culture of seemingly individual but related partnerships will aid greatly in making UAF's resources and rich knowledge base in the sciences and other areas of scholarship accessible to students, professional educators, researchers, and other potential user groups across Alaska. The UAF Science Education Clearinghouse, created to serve such user groups, has been one of the most notable products of the Higher Education Project. Its creation represents a significant change in attitude among formerly independent entities and a willingness to come together to provide a comprehensive list of UAF science education outreach opportunities for the public. This new partnership is not only an excellent example of engagement, it will undoubtedly be one of the most dynamic and lasting legacies of the Higher Education Project. Importantly, the Clearinghouse is likely to expand its outreach to rural communities and, indeed, to the entire state. Moreover, a Memorandum of Collaboration for the support and founding of the UAF Science Education Clearinghouse has been formulated and approved by UAF's Provost and key administrators of Science Education and Related Programs. Funding for the Clearinghouse comes from a consortium of organizations affiliated with UAF, including the Cooperative Extension Service, the Rural Alaska Education Grant, the School of Natural Resources and

Agricultural Sciences, the International Arctic Research Center, the Experimental Programs to Stimulate Competitive Research group, the Arctic Region Supercomputing Center, the Sea Grant Geophysical Institute, the Space Grant program, the School of Mineral Engineering, the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and University Relations.

3. Building Collaborations and Partnerships Among University Extended

Campuses. The Higher Education Project has been a driving force for increased collaboration between UAF's major outreach provider groups in serving the educational needs of Alaska's people and, in particular, those residing in rural regions. It has created a forum for the Director of the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service and the Directors of the CRA Extended Campuses to engage in continuing dialogue about the problems and needs of Alaska's rural people and their communities. The Directors' attention has focused on broad issues and areas of concern that impact the quality of life of rural Alaskans, including improved access to higher quality public education, improvement in the economy (including the creation of new and higher paying jobs), and improved health services for all people. Further, these discussions not only help to identify, address, and resolve these issues, they are also creating among UAF administration and faculty a renewed understanding of the plight of rural people and the need for UAF to form partnerships with these residents to help them attain a higher quality of life.

An important product that has evolved through these collaborations between the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service and UAF/CRA Extended Campuses is a comprehensive, jointly designed needs assessment of the educational, economic

development, and health-related needs of the six rural regions and their peoples. These assessments have been designed and tailored to each of the regions and are being conducted by UAF's Higher Education Project staff. The people residing in each of the regions, along with their leaders, represent important community stakeholder groups participating in the needs assessment. The findings of these assessments will be used to inform and provide direction for the joint program efforts of the Cooperative Extension Service and CRA Extended Campuses and other UAF faculty groups in response to the assessed needs of people in rural Alaska.

The UAF/CRA Extended Campuses were founded as community colleges and in many ways still function like community colleges. The focused collaboration between them and the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service is the first instance of such a purposeful endeavor between community colleges and Cooperative Extension in the nation, and has the potential to become a model for the nation's State Cooperative Extension Services and community colleges in the other 49 states and the US territories.

4. Building Partnerships with Public Schools. The Higher Education Project has played a major role in strengthening UAF's bonds with public education by forming partnerships with the 26 public school districts in rural Alaska to assist in the revitalization of K – 12 education. The Higher Education Project is networking and partnering with the 26 districts and their teachers to design and implement curricula that integrate research-based scientific content, native culture, and natural resources education. Such curricula can be used to facilitate and improve the teaching of mathematics and science using phenomena unique to the students' culture and region.

Through the Higher Education Project's minigrant funding initiative, 28 innovative teaching projects that focus on the integration of scientific knowledge with native culture and ways of knowing are being implemented by secondary education teachers in rural regions served by UAF.

Links between rural public school districts and UAF are further reflected in the Higher Education Project's collaboration with secondary school administrators and teachers in developing and conducting a mini-assessment of Alaska's secondary science and math curriculum needs. Phase 1 of this mini-assessment uses a qualitative list of curriculum needs and opportunities for Alaska's secondary science and math curricula. Phase 2 focuses on prioritizing and refining curricula needs in the teaching of math and science and determining the preferred methods of the teachers in learning the concepts and skills related to those needs.

Further in its quest to enhance UAF's engagement with public schools in rural Alaska and the state as a whole, the Higher Education Project has established a UAF website which: 1) provides a widely used and recognized clearinghouse of UAF programming that enhances secondary students' development in mathematics, science, and natural resources management; and 2) communicates results of the funded minigrants and other curricula projects to secondary teachers, along with information on integration and application. The products of the 28 minigrant projects that focus on innovative strategies and techniques for teaching math and science concepts and developing problem-solving skills as well as curricula developed through contracts of the Higher Education Project with private and public education groups are posted on the website.

Through the Higher Education Project's website, minigrant projects, and needs assessments, the UAF partnerships with the 26 public school districts in rural Alaska are creating opportunities for mutually beneficial exchanges and interfaces with UAF's academic faculty and public secondary school administrators and teachers in rural Alaska.

5. Repositioning the Regional Cooperative Extension Centers to Function as UAF

Gateways. The Higher Education Project has been an advocate of and active in introducing and initiating the Gateway concept to UAF. Through a formal agreement, the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service has entered into a partnership with UAF's Tanana Valley Campus (TVC) that extends TVC's courses and program offerings to the Delta Region through the Delta Cooperative Extension Center. Through the leadership of the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, the Delta Extension Center has been designated as UAF's Gateway in the Delta Region with the charge to connect UAF's rich knowledge base and abundant resources to the educational needs of people and community groups residing in this agricultural, mining, and rural region. This Cooperative Extension Center, functioning as a Gateway to UAF, provides its TVC a permanent presence in the Delta community and region. The Delta Cooperative Extension Center has a long and distinguished history in the Delta Region and is a respected center for information that is available to all of the residents in the district. TVC's goal, through the Cooperative Extension Center, is to enhance its presence in the Delta Region by providing a place where residents can access information about educational opportunities available through TVC, both in Delta and at its Fairbanks

campus. This partnership with the Delta Extension Center in a true sense functions as an extended campus of the TVC and, importantly, UAF.

Functioning as a Gateway to UAF, the local-based Delta Extension Center, in addition to performing its Cooperative Extension Service program responsibilities, also works with TVC to: 1) advertise and market TVC and UAF programs and courses; 2) respond to inquiries of people in the region about TVC and UAF educational opportunities; 3) facilitate student information and registration for courses; and 4) make appropriate referrals to TVC Student Assistance for further information on vocational counseling, assessments, academic advising, and other specific programmatic information.

Piloting the Gateway to UAF concept through the Delta Cooperative Extension Center, and utilizing lessons learned from this collaborative effort, the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service and Higher Education Project have as their goal extending and replicating the Gateway to UAF concept to other Alaska Cooperative Extension Regional Centers dispersed throughout the vast landscape of Alaska. This innovation adds strength to the engagement initiatives of UAF and its renewed commitment to make its knowledge base and resources accessible to the people and communities throughout Alaska.

6. Building Regional Alliances and Connecting UAF to Existing Regional Alliances.

The Higher Education Project is assuming a lead role in renewing and rebuilding a sense of community among the people and community agencies, organizations, and groups in each of the six rural regions that are served by UAF/CRA Extended Campuses and the

Alaska Cooperative Extension Service. Re-energizing the concept of community among native people who are widely dispersed throughout each of the rural regions and fostering unity and collaboration in learning to work together to resolve critical issues that impact their quality of life are high priority goals of the Higher Education Project. It is only through such unity and alliances among the leaders in each of the rural regions that the resources of existing agencies, organizations, and groups can be brought together to address and resolve regional issues. Further, these regional alliances are needed to facilitate, enhance, and maximize UAF's programmatic efforts to help each of the rural regions improve their educational systems, upgrade their economies through resource-based economic development strategies, and improve health-related services.

One example of the success of the Higher Education Project in rebuilding a sense of community in one rural region and thereby strengthening UAF's engagement in that region is the strengthening of an existing regional alliance/consortium, the Northwest Arctic Workforce Development and Education Consortium, located in Kotzebue and serving the Northwest Arctic region. The Higher Education Project is providing technical and consultative assistance to this established regional consortium. It is continuing to evolve into a strong collaborative alliance of community and regional organizations and is now addressing education, economic development, and health issues impacting the quality of life of the region's residents. The Higher Education Project staff is also assisting leaders and important stakeholders in the other five rural regions served by UAF/CRA Extended Campuses and the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service in acquiring a greater understanding and appreciation of the need to rebuild a sense of unity and community in their respective regions. The goal of the Higher Education Project

staff is to encourage the people, their leaders, and community organized groups in each of these rural regions to work together in the form of regional alliances to address and work towards resolving major issues that exist in their regions. Indications are that leaders in these rural regions are responding to the call for community renewal and the need for collaboration among the people and community groups to resolve critical life issues.

Concurrent with, and as part of this community building effort in the six rural regions, the Higher Education Project staff has initiated and is providing leadership in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment in each of the regions. A two-stage process utilizing information extrapolated from existing regional data and reports and information gathered from interviews conducted with key informants in each of the regions is being incorporated into the regional needs assessment. These data identify the main themes and issues in each region. These themes as well as the interviews that will be an integral part of the needs assessment in each region will be examined closely by key leaders in each region, the Director of the Extended Campus in the respective region, and the Director of the Cooperative Extension Service. The findings of these regional needs assessments will be incorporated into individual reports specific to each region and a combined cumulative report for the six regions. The Higher Education Project staff will work with the Northwest Arctic Workforce Development and Education Consortium and the leaders in the other five regions to interpret the findings generated from their respective regions and begin to explore strategies for responding to the assessed needs.

This collaborative effort, in building alliances/consortiums in each of the rural regions and engaging them in comprehensive assessment of the needs of people in their respective regions, will magnify the engagement posture of UAF in using its resources to

empower people in each of the regions to address and resolve critical issues in their personal lives and those that affect their communities. It is through collaborating and partnering with regional alliances/consortiums that the full impact of UAF's knowledge and resources can be brought to bear in helping these groups tackle complex issues such as public education, economic development, health care, and infrastructure.

Conclusions and reflections

Engagement, coupled with the land-grant university's quest to become a fully engaged land-grant university, is an evolving transformational process. The elusive but achievable goal is to transform the land-grant university into one that is in continuous interaction with its external environment, reacting and responding to the complex and changing social, cultural, economic, and technological forces that impact and affect the character of this environment. It is through adopting, institutionalizing, and implementing the concept and spirit of engagement that the land-grant university can transform and become repositioned to practice those behaviors that the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Universities and Land-grant Colleges characterized as "the engaged land-grant university and its culture." Unless today's land-grant university adopts and integrates the concept and spirit of engagement into its ongoing institutional behavior, culture, and mode of operation, its uniqueness as the people's university, that is, one that exists to serve the educational and economic development needs of an increasing and diverse people and their communities, will be diminished in relevance and impact. Functioning in its present mode, the land-grant university will, for all practical

purposes, be indistinguishable from other publicly supported higher education institutions.

UAF's Higher Education Project has contributed to the advancement of the concept of engagement and has demonstrated through its collaboration-focused activities noteworthy engagement strategies that have captured the attention of UAF administrators and faculty. Functioning as a catalyst, the Higher Education Project and its Advisory Committee, whose membership is broadly representative of UAF administration and faculty and state-wide agencies and organizations, has championed the notion of engagement. The Higher Education Project has provided the impetus for UAF to become more engaged by 1) engendering a spirit of engagement among the faculty across the university community; 2) initiating and energizing a collaborative culture of partnership that unites seemingly unrelated academic disciplines to package and disseminate research-based knowledge via the internet to users and publics external to the campus; 3) increasing collaboration and partnerships among several of UAF's extension/outreach groups to mount joint program initiatives aimed at empowering people and their leaders in rural communities to bring to bear combined resources in identifying, addressing, and resolving critical issues; 4) strengthening UAF's bonds with public secondary education through partnerships with public school districts in rural Alaska that have as their focus the revitalization of K-12 education; 5) functioning as an advocate for and assisting in the introduction of the *Gateway to UAF* concept by repositioning the Delta Regional Cooperative Extension Center to broaden its program initiatives to serve also as the university's liaison in connecting UAF's rich knowledge base and abundant resources to the residents of the Delta region; and 6) building alliances/consortiums of leaders and

stakeholders in each of the six rural regions served by UAF's CRA Extended Campuses and the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, engaging these regional groups in a continuing needs assessment study of people in their respective regions, assisting these alliances/consortiums to pool their resources to respond to the assessed needs, and connecting UAF and its resources to the work of these regional alliances/consortiums.

Although the work of the Higher Education Project, and that of other university groups that have an interest and stake in engagement, is yielding crucial information about the practice of engagement through innovative program activities, the critical challenge remains for UAF and other land-grant universities to define and formulate indicators that confirm that these people's universities have become and are functioning as engaged land-grant universities. It is important, therefore, to construct indicators that are applicable not just to the Alaska experience, but to land-grant universities and colleges throughout the nation. Such universal engagement indicators can be derived, in part, from lessons learned through UAF's Higher Education Project and from informed insights advanced by the community college campus compact community and experts on organizational development and the transformation of higher education organizations. Out of this background, the following heuristic indicators of an engaged land-grant university are proposed for reflection and adaptation by land-grant university administrators and other significant stakeholder groups, including their faculties, governance officials, and user groups.

A. Mission and Purpose

- The land-grant university's mission explicitly defines and articulates its commitment to engagement as an integral part of its teaching/learning, research/discovery, and extension/outreach functions in responding to the educational and economic development needs of its state and its people.
- The land-grant university's commitment to engagement is an aspect of its mission that is highly valued and is used to promote and explain the university's unique role in disseminating research-based knowledge in partnership with the state's people, their leaders, and public and private organizations and agencies to address and resolve critical issues that impact quality of life.
- The land-grant university welcomes and encourages inputs and suggested changes from its constituents and other stakeholders concerning the effectiveness of its engagement program activities in developing the state's human resources and economy. The land-grant university has a functioning state-wide advisory committee that is strongly supported by the advisory committees of its county or regional Cooperative Extension Centers. This advisory leadership system (i.e., the university advisory committee and county or regional advisory committees) provides the university's leaders with counsel and advice on the effectiveness of the university's engagement programs in responding to state-wide, regional, and local issues. Through these advisory groups, the land-grant university's administrators, faculty, staff, and governance officials enhance their understanding about the external environment of the land-grant university and, importantly, how they can position the land-grant university to respond to this environment more effectively.

B. *Organization and Administrative Leadership*

- Engagement is viewed as one of the land-grant university's major programmatic functions and is accorded equal status with teaching/learning and research/discovery functions in the university's organizational and administrative hierarchy.
- The engagement and outreach function is led by a Vice President or Chancellor who reports directly to the President or Chancellor of the land-grant university. The primary role of this administrator is to provide leadership for and coordinate the university's engagement and outreach programs across the university campus.
- The President or Chancellor and the Vice Presidents or Vice Chancellors, who are responsible for the teaching/learning and research/discovery functions, strongly support the university's engagement and outreach function in their words, actions, and practices.
- The land-grant university's commitment to its engagement and outreach function permeates throughout and is an integral part of the university's colleges, divisions, and departments. Importantly, this commitment to engagement, both in words and actions, extends through its Cooperative Extension Centers that are strategically located in each of the state's regions or counties. These Centers are designated as university centers and *gateways* to the land-grant university, providing people from all walks of life access to the land-grant university's rich knowledge base and abundant resources.
- The land-grant university is publicly regarded as a useful and reliable partner in the development of the state's human and natural resources and economy.

- Through the leadership of its Vice President or Vice Chancellor, Cooperative Extension Director, college deans, program division directors, and department heads, the university is continuously engaged in scanning its external environment to maintain a current knowledge base of evolving needs and societal issues that merit the attention of the university through its engagement program activities. The land-grant university's state-wide advisory committee, as well as its regional or county extension centers' advisory committees, are involved in conducting environmental scans and collecting and interpreting data that are useful in plotting future directions and program initiatives for the university for inclusion in the university's strategic plan.

C. Disciplines, Divisions, Departments, and Interdisciplinary Program Areas

- The concept and spirit of engagement is manifest in and is an integral part of learning opportunities across the university's curricula and programs. Engagement is pervasive and is as much a part of the humanities, social sciences and art, professional studies, and hard sciences and mathematics as it is of agriculture and natural resources, design, engineering, and health sciences.
- Students enrolled in university courses are afforded multiple opportunities to participate in engagement program opportunities, ranging from problem-solving in the community to serving as assistants to engagement and outreach professionals located on and off the university's main campus.

- Divisions and academic departments in most disciplines provide capstone engagement experiences for their students and alumni (including practicums, seminars, forums, meetings) focused on community-based problems or issues.
- Engagement initiatives are structured and/or coordinated across disciplines.

D. Teaching and Learning

- The land-grant university recognizes that course content can be delivered in many ways and, therefore, provides faculty sufficient flexibility to integrate engagement strategies into the design and delivery of their courses and curricula.
- Multiple cultural and historical perspectives on engagement and outreach in the context of the land-grant university are integrated throughout the students' curricular experiences.
- Active participation in university engagement and outreach programs (i.e., service learning) encourages students to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, identify problems, and work with people, business and industry, and community groups in solving those problems.
- Knowledge of the real world, particularly as it applies to local, regional, state, and national community contexts, is valued as essential to the total education of the student in preparing him or her for future participation in society and the world of work.
- Experiential learning is valued by faculty and administrators as well as students as an academically credible method of education.

- Students are formally introduced to the concepts and skills necessary for civic engagement and community development work early in their academic careers.

E. Responding to and Serving the Educational and Economic Development Needs of the Land-grant University's External Publics that include all of the State's Residents and its Multitude of Public and Private Agencies, Organizations, and Groups.

- The land-grant university is committed to partnering with the state's people, their leaders, and public and private groups and collaborating with them as equal partners in joint program initiatives aimed at improving local, regional, and state economies and, thus, the quality of life of the state's people.
- Through its regional or county Cooperative Extension Service Centers that function as gateways to the land-grant university, the university's rich knowledge base and abundant resources are made accessible and readily available to people and their stakeholder groups, including business and industry and public service organizations. In this way, the land-grant university empowers its constituents to grapple with and resolve critical issues and problems within their designated geographic and political regions.
- The land-grant university's regional and county Cooperative Extension Service Centers (i.e., university centers and gateways) are actively engaged in partnering with the people and public and private agencies and organizations in their respective regions and counties to address and resolve issues that are negatively impacting quality of life and their economy. This extended university faculty group (in the case of county services, known as the County Extension Office)

possesses the knowledge, skills, and authority to provide leadership to community and regional groups in connecting university resources to local program initiatives that require the university's technical and educational expertise to resolve various community and regional issues.

- The county or regional Extension Center (or, UAF gateway) provides a forum for the continuing input and counsel of advisory groups whose membership is representative of the people and significant stakeholders in their respective county or region. These advisory groups focus on increasing the effectiveness of the land-grant university's outreach and engagement programs. Importantly, they contribute informed insights gleaned from their life experiences and knowledge of critical issues that can then be used by the land-grant university's teaching/learning and research/discovery programs. These direct links with the people increase the relevance and commitment of the land-grant university to the state's people and economy.

F. Faculty Development

- The land-grant university provides its on-campus academic and research faculty and its on- and off-campus engagement faculty with continuing education opportunities to ensure that faculty remain current with engagement scholarship and become aware of new strategies for enriching the spirit and practice of engagement in academic curricula and programs and in extension/outreach programs.

- Funds are provided to support the participation of on-campus and off-campus faculty in professional continuing education opportunities that focus on enriching, expanding, and strengthening their knowledge base of and skills in practicing engagement.
- Academic faculty have access to curriculum development grants and are allowed reduced teaching loads to enhance their ability to offer quality engagement opportunities, such as service learning courses, to their students.

G. Faculty Roles and Incentives

- The land-grant university's tenure, promotion, and retention policies and guidelines assign value to faculty participation and performance in engagement program initiatives and activities on an equal basis with faculty participation and performance in university teaching/learning and research/discovery program initiatives and activities. The scholarship of engagement is valued and viewed in the same light as the scholarship of teaching and scholarship of research.
- Faculty data forms, annual reports, and other required evaluations include sections related to participation in engagement and off-campus professional service or other forms of academically based public work. (*Faculty* includes on- and off-campus faculty and cooperative extension faculty.)
- The land-grant university's commitment to engagement must be understood as a major criterion in faculty recruitment by the administrators of academic programs.

H. Budget and Resource Allocation

- The land-grant university includes as an important part of its budget requests to the state legislature a line item for the funds needed to maintain and enrich its engagement and outreach programs.
- The land-grant university provides the funds to support, enhance, and deepen the involvement of its faculty (i.e., on-campus and off-campus) in its engagement and outreach program initiatives and activities.
- The land-grant university's advancement/foundation office, as well as those located in the university's colleges, together are actively engaged in procuring funds from private donors and government and public groups to aid in the financial support of the university's engagement and outreach programs. On-campus and off-campus engagement and outreach faculty are helped to acquire and maintain an up-to-date knowledge base about potential opportunities for external funds and, importantly, are provided technical assistance in the preparation and processing of proposals.

The land-grant university, founded during one of the nation's darkest periods of Civil War strife, was in itself a revolutionary idea that was viewed by many of America's leaders and educators as a threat to the established education community that had been patterned along the lines of universities in Europe. This new approach to higher education focused on making higher education accessible to the sons and daughters of the working classes, with an emphasis on agriculture, mechanical arts, and related practical subjects. The land-grant universities represented a major departure from the mission,

philosophy, and curricula of the nation's higher education institutions as they existed at the time. The addition of a publicly funded research function that was critically needed to create a scientific knowledge base for the agricultural sciences and mechanical arts (i.e., engineering), and later the addition of a publicly funded extension/outreach function to disseminate this newly created research-based information enhanced the uniqueness of this publicly funded higher education institution and system. Functioning as *the people's university*, their campus boundaries are defined as the boundaries of their respective states. As such, the nation's land-grant universities and colleges have been acclaimed by its leaders as having contributed more than any other part of the educational establishment to the development of the nation's people, economy, and quality of life that is the envy of the world. The major contributions of the nation's land-grant universities and colleges include, among others, 1) making education accessible at a level unparalleled elsewhere in the world; 2) creating a prodigious research engine; and 3) bringing the benefits of education to millions of people so that they become empowered to address and solve problems in their daily lives.

The renewal of this uniquely American system of education is critical to the continued health of the nation, its people, and economy. The land-grant university must reconnect with and re-energize its interaction with the people by incorporating the concept and spirit of engagement in every aspect of its being. Engagement is the pathway for the land-grant university into the 21st century. It can elevate the land-grant university to a more central position in the affairs of the American people and, importantly, in the continuing development of the nation's economy. Through engagement, the nation's land-grant university renews its resolve, commitment, and

energy to work with the people rather than for the people. As one of the nation's highly respected and unique institutions of change, the nation's land-grant university is now positioned to recapture its position of prominence in leading the education of the nation's people.

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