

May 20, 2020

To: Vice President Paul Layer: Academic Council
Cc: President Johnsen

From: Heather Batchelder Chair, Faculty Alliance
Julie A.K. Maier, Vice Chair, Faculty Alliance

Re: Course Sharing and GERs

Dear Chair Vice President Layer and Members of the Academic Council:

Thank you all for working diligently on the various issues that are impacting the University of Alaska system. I especially appreciate the attention on our students who have endured an unprecedented set of circumstances associated with UA and the pandemic.

As we move forward, the work of the Common Calendar Committee has provided cost sharing opportunities and course block alignment across the system. The Faculty Senates from each separately accredited university voted unanimously to accept Proposal Number One: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kpDhw2fua5BSxmZqkIT0zFCZjENTjv7T5jeXC-Lu1j8/edit?usp=sharing> .

Proposal 1 was also well received by the programs that are already sharing courses across the system and we are certain that it will allow other programs to do so as well. Ideally, the Board of Regents will vote to adopt the proposed course schedule for the three universities to enable the implementation of the plan. Further alignment beyond this plan may result in unnecessary changes that do not provide cost savings, may cause disruption to students, may result in decreased enrollment, and will not necessarily serve students in the UA system well. Additionally, each of the separately accredited universities have created their curricula and defined the length of a credit hour to align with their unique missions and the needs of their students.

Currently, the Faculty Senates have done the work necessary to enroll UAS, UAA, and UAF as members of the Interstate Passport System (IPS) <http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/about/overview/>.

The three separately accredited universities have been working collaboratively, led by UAA and through the efforts of the UA Faculty Alliance, to become part of the IP system. Hence, not only have the faculty of the three universities worked well together to align the GERs of the three universities, they have also worked together to align the GERs of the three universities with the block of GERs of all of the members of the IPS. Membership in the IPS takes transferability, categorization, and exceptions out of the GER equation. The question of GER alignment is no longer relevant. Any further modification of the GERs may result in misalignment with the IPS, which would hurt students, both current and future. Given that faculty have purview over

curriculum, any decision to “consolidate and redesign common GERs” will require the work and approval of the faculty and Faculty Senates of the three universities.

Faculty from the Philosophy, Engineering, and Computer Science programs have worked together to offer their programs across the system and to ensure the viability of their programs into the future via course sharing. For example, the Philosophy programs at UAA and UAF created a Memorandum of Understanding enabling students of both institutions to enroll in the Philosophy degree program at their parent institution but to take courses from either UAA or UAF to complete their degrees. This agreement ensures that the Philosophy program at each institution will remain viable. These collaborations were envisioned by faculty, have been successful, and have provided students at the participating institutions with educational opportunities that they otherwise would not have. Building collaborations to allow the coordination of programs and curriculum works well when decided upon and developed by faculty. Certainly, these successes are accomplished in consultation and coordination with the appropriate administrators as well and they broaden the opportunities for students across the system. The prescribed coordination of the Education curriculum across the system, by comparison, was mandated by the statewide administration and has been unsuccessful, resulting in the loss of a large number of students from the Education programs at UA.