Date: April 13, 2018

To: Martha Mason, UA Interim CITO
    OIT Staff

From: Jim Johnsen, UA President

Re: IT Organization and Leadership

Following on our discussion a couple weeks ago, I have consulted with Chancellor White, outside consultants, and leaders here in Statewide, and I have given thought to how to proceed with organizational and leadership issues in OIT.

I would like to share these thoughts and next steps with you today and get your feedback. I start with some context.

- IT is a critical component of virtually every academic and administrative process at the university.

- The university provides IT services through three IT units, one at UAS, one at UAA, and the third at UAF/Statewide (OIT).

- The university’s investment in IT is substantial; a recent estimate for our annual systemwide spend is $45 million.

- Funding for the OIT organization serving the UA system, Statewide and UAF is provided by both UAF and Statewide, with little apparent rationale for the relationship between funding and services.

- Over the last several years, a number of reviews have been conducted that suggest needed changes in IT. Two of these reviews—Statewide Transformation and Strategic Pathways—resulted in cost reduction, staffing changes, and employee morale issues.
• The most recent review, conducted by IT consultant James Szmack, provides an assessment of our current IT organization along with a series of recommendations for enhanced organizational effectiveness.

• Meanwhile, IT is in the midst of a major upgrade of UA’s core enterprise system (Banner) supporting finance, human resources, and students. This upgrade is scheduled for completion in 2018 and is essential for continued support of mission critical services.

• The university’s Chief IT Officer recently resigned, adding to staff uncertainty and resulting in the need to address both organizational and leadership issues expeditiously.

Issues
• How should the university’s IT services be organized? Specifically, should IT at UAF and Statewide continue to be provided by a merged organization?

• If demerged, how will the UAF IT organization be structured, staffed, and funded?

• And, if demerged, how will we select new leadership for these two organizations?

Decision
As recommended in recent reports and supported by UAF, I have decided to demerge OIT in two ways.

• First, UAF IT services will be provided by a new IT organization at UAF, similar to the way IT services are provided at UAA and UAS. The new UAF IT unit will be led by a Chief Information Officer (CIO) with responsibilities comparable to those held by the CIOs at UAA and UAS.
  o My vision for UAF IT is that it be focused on providing excellent operational support for UAF and not, in addition to that important work, be running our systemwide enterprise systems and—at the same time—trying to develop technology strategies for the long term future of higher education in Alaska.
  o As a result of this substantial expansion of responsibilities and change in the role for UAF’s CIO, a new position description is required; it will be the basis for recruitment. I will defer to UAF for how it would fill this position.

• Second, OIT will focus on providing strategic leadership for IT statewide—supporting UA’s strategic academic and other priorities and initiatives—while providing cost effective enterprise wide IT services.
April 13, 2018
Page 3

- I believe that our current organizational structure has resulted in a strong operational capacity, but insufficient focus on the long term, on how technology can enable our vision for higher education in the state.

- OIT will be led by a Chief Information Technology Officer (CITO), the recruitment for which will commence immediately. It is expected that we will have a new CITO on board early this summer. The IT Council will serve as the screening committee for this search.

Transition
- First, I want to thank Martha Mason for stepping up to serve as interim CITO during this transition. I am confident in her ability to calm the waters, fill the already approved and needed positions, and make sure employees have support in their multiple projects, and minimize changes while we recruit.

- Second, the development of our plan to transition to this new structure will commence immediately with data gathering and analysis. Completion of the specific transition plan will await appointment of the statewide CITO and UAF CIO. We will need their collaboration and leadership to make this work. I expect that a significant period of time will be required for the transition given the extent of changes and the importance of operational continuity.

- Third, as that plan is developed and implemented, I want to ensure you—to the greatest extent possible—continued employment for our OIT employees. You are an extremely valuable group of people who do very important work for us, and we must do all we can to ensure confidence in your future at UA, whether in the statewide OIT or in UAF’s new IT organization.

Next Steps
1. Form a transition team to begin collecting data so that when leadership issues are settled, we are ready to move forward (McGee*, N. Ripley, Burrell, Ciri, Queen, Mason, Meckel).
2. Finalize the CITO position description by end of April and start search in early May. Create screening committee with employee members. (McGee*, Ciri, Burrell).
3. Create UAF CIO position description by end of April and start search in early May. Create screening committee with employee members. (McGee, Burrell).
4. Build a solid employee communication plan—including regular updates to you and a venue for your input—so you know what’s going on and have opportunities to provide input along the way. (Transition team plus Renfrew, Graham*.)

*Responsible/Lead
Close

- As we move forward with these steps, I ask that you continue providing the excellent service you now give to the university. These changes are being pursued NOT because of your performance. Rather, they are intended to help you do what you already do well, even better, by providing strong, focused leadership and clear organization purpose.

- The journey we are embarking on will be bumpy and we will all need to be patient. But at the end of the day, I am confident that both UAF and the UA system will be able to achieve our goals on behalf of Alaskans in large part due to our more strategic use of technology in everything we do.

- While I understand that change is tough, please do think of this process as an opportunity to weigh in with your ideas for how we can improve, and how we can truly be the university that creates the Alaska we all want.

Thank you!

JRJ

cc: Chancellors, CIOs, VCASs
Myron Dosch
Robbie Graham
Keli Hite-McGee
Paul Layer
Steve Meckel
Julie Queen
Michelle Renfrew
Nycolett Ripley
Michelle Rizk