

I. Introduction

Enrollment is core to our mission and important to the university's financial health. Waning state support has led UA to rely on student enrollments and the associated tuition revenues. Finances aside, UA's ability to attract, retain and graduate Alaskans is central to the university's mission. As the state's primary provider of an educated and well-trained populace, it's imperative that UA attract and serve Alaskans.

In September 2016 President Johnsen convened enrollment summits at each of the universities. The universities led discussions and provided details about their efforts to attract, retain and graduate students. The conversations were candid and informative for the President and his staff.

The enrollment management efforts at the universities vary along a continuum with certain efforts more developed at one or more campuses. Because of this, the universities' responses to the information that follows will be dictated by where they are on this continuum. For example, UAF has already considered its enrollment goals for the next five years. The time they need to devote to this component will be less than perhaps UAA and UAS. Similarly, UAA has given thought to how they might organize to maximize their efforts at managing their enrollments and UAS has provided leadership in the area of completion and graduation.

This enrollment-planning document is an initial response to the President's directive that UA provide an actionable plan to address the enrollment declines of the past five years. This document is not meant to prescribe *how* campuses will increase enrollment - that level of detail requires the engagement of the experts at the campuses. Instead this planning document offers a high level view of general observations, components the campuses' enrollment plans should include or address, thoughts on how to serve the 115,000 Alaskans with some college credit but no college degree, and a section on systemic efforts for the President to consider for supporting enrollment efforts across the University of Alaska.

Finally, there is a sense of urgency here that calls for deliberate and measured action. Student enrollment is core to the work of each campus and university. The fiscal implications of having fewer and fewer students are visible and easily understood. Less direct - but no less problematic: if the University of Alaska is unable to attract, retain and graduate Alaskans - who will?

II. General Observations

- Enrollment at any university is a long-term issue. Universities do not gain nor do they lose enrollments overnight. Losses often happen over a sustained period of time for a variety of complex and sometimes interconnected reasons. Losses can occur among some student segments, but not others. At UA overall enrollment declines have been observed since fall 2011. Yet, over this time there have been increases in some student populations: the Fairbanks campus has increased headcount by almost 5%, Kodiak College over 6% and Ketchikan almost 9% since 2011.
- Enrollment losses are difficult to attribute to any single event and can be symptomatic of factors found in the education and employment environment. In Alaska some of those factors include a lack of a college going culture and a state job market that has offered high wages without commensurate college education. At each of the enrollment summits, universities pointed out how declines in the population of Alaska high school graduates have negatively impacted incoming freshman classes.
- While external factors surely contribute to the recent declines, UA must also account for factors at the system and campus level that may have also led to enrollment losses. This is currently a question that UA has contracted with the McDowell Group to help answer. Determining why enrollments have declined with some specificity is crucial if UA is to reverse this trend. Answering this question requires candid introspection into all aspects of a campus - not simply student services.
- Enrollment increases are rarely achieved by 'silver-bullets'. Instead, gains are hard-fought and occur over time through systemic changes. This cannot be overstated: stopping the decline and then increasing enrollment will not be accomplished by disparate or discrete initiatives. *It will take a comprehensive approach at the campus level with support from the UA System.*
- Without clearly articulated enrollment goals, campuses cannot set their sights. They will not be able to see if their efforts are succeeding or failing. The unique missions of each university should be used to define the goals for what students they will recruit, retain, and graduate. Integrating the universities' missions into their enrollment goals is a leading and necessary component of enrollment planning strategy.

III. Components to consider in campus enrollment plans

1. Setting enrollment goals. Universities must have well defined goals for enrollment before investing time and resources on their enrollment strategies. The prevailing temptation is to begin enrollment planning at the tactical stage. When enrollment declines, campus conversations drift toward rapid-fire tactical ideas: hiring a retention director, expanding technology or systems, increased advertising or offering more financial aid or increasing the discount rate. The result is often an incoherent mix of retention and recruitment efforts that are costly, and if successful, are only so in the short term. The universities' efforts at setting enrollment goals are the first step toward a more comprehensive and holistic view of managing their enrollments. Enrollment goals should be a direct outgrowth of the universities' missions and include the following elements: retention, attainment (graduation/completion), and new student recruitment. Enrollment goals should be based on a five-year time horizon.

2. Committing to increasing enrollment through a dual approach that emphasizes retention *and* recruitment. Universities will be hard pressed to achieve enrollment growth by relying only on recruitment or only on retention efforts. Recruitment and retention should be emphasized as two distinct efforts of equal importance. The combined results of both efforts should help the universities achieve their enrollment goals. This deliberate focus on each area is intended to avoid falling prey to the classic conundrum in enrollment planning where retention discussions invariably focus on the attributes of entering students, thus placing the onus with recruitment to 'enroll better students'. This in turn leads recruitment personnel to contend that higher retention rates would be more attractive to students, especially those with higher levels of college preparation.

To avoid this tension, the universities should give equal consideration to and provide sufficient resources for both retention and recruitment efforts. Universities may also want to consider organizational structures that recognize the unique roles of their retention and recruitment efforts.

3. Structural considerations: is the university organized to help advance the enrollment initiatives that will support their enrollment goals? A structure (*next page*) borrowed from the University of Cincinnati depicts a potential strategic enrollment management structure for a university.

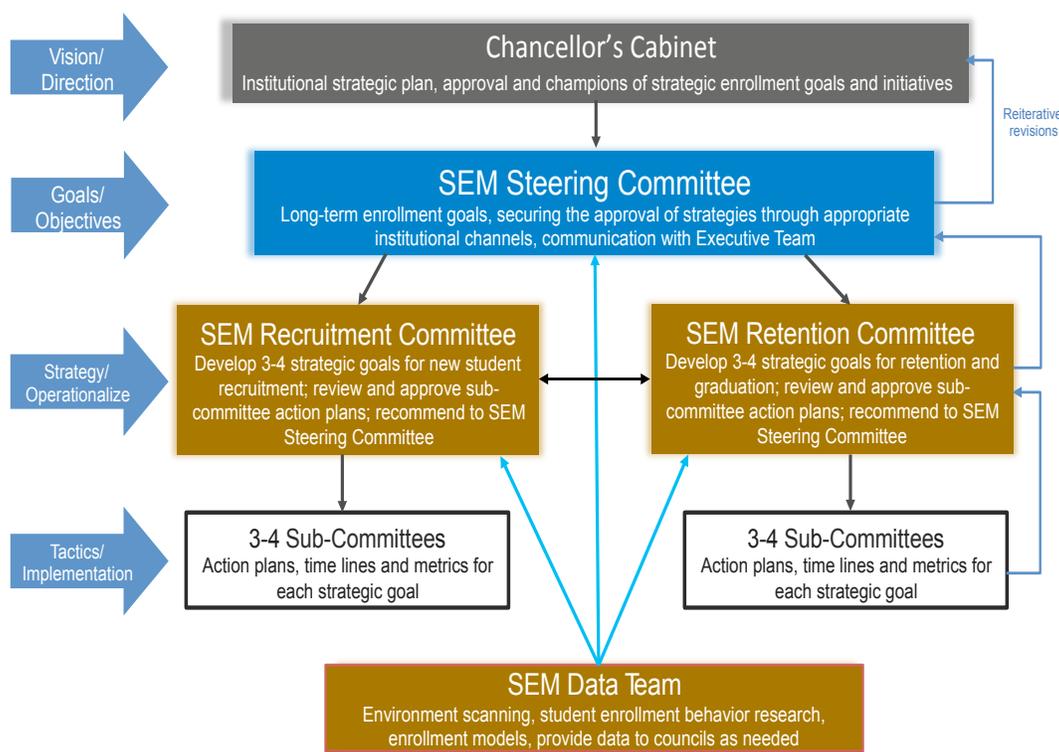
The graphic represents how a university may organize. Our universities may already have existing teams or structures that fill these roles. However, this is an opportunity to create greater collaboration across the university by improving the mix of faculty, staff and

administrators on those teams. This is also a time to expand and broaden the enrollment conversation among more of the university's constituents than simply the office of admissions or enrollment services.

Gaining campus wide buy-in on enrollment initiatives will require broad participation. The framework depicted in the organizational structure provides guidance on how the relationships and interplay among the distinct teams can be managed to help achieve enrollment success. In the end, it is less about structure and more about the need for linkages, shared goals, improved communication, and synergy.

Of interest should be the **Data Team** depicted on the chart. Managing enrollments is partly achieved through an understanding of the universities' data trends. It is deliberate that the Data Team is positioned as the foundation of this SEM (Strategic Enrollment Management) structure.

SEM Organizational Framework



4. Tuition and financial aid in enrollment planning. The connection between enrollment and tuition is clear: the more students who enroll (or the more classes those

students enroll in) the more tuition revenue the university generates. Yet this linear relationship is seemingly minimized in favor of tuition discounting strategies that aim to increase enrollment by offering substantial discounts for specific populations. Before the university decides to discount tuition as part of an enrollment strategy, we should analyze the proposal and carefully weigh the pros and cons. Attempting to increase the number of students, while losing revenue, is unsustainable. For example, for each student that UA waives the non-resident surcharge for, we would need to enroll an additional 2.5 resident students to make up the lost non-resident revenue.

Scrutiny toward how we discount tuition lends itself to a more targeted discussion on financial aid at UA - specifically a conversation regarding financial aid leveraging.

In AY15, UA awarded over \$132M dollars in financial aid to over 15,000 students. That aid is comprised of loans \$64,556,000, grants \$30,495,000, scholarships \$32,907,000, tuition waivers \$3,766,000 and work study \$626,000. Financial aid is an important driver of enrollment because it helps students pay for the costs of college attendance. Who we provide financial help to and how we provide that help are key issues in helping manage our enrollments. A strategic approach to these issues is found in financial aid leveraging.

- Financial aid leveraging promotes access by efficiently using existing financial aid resources so that dollars are not wasted.
- Financial aid leveraging is a data-driven process that finds the amount each student needs to enroll, helping to reduce over-awarding of aid to some students and under-awarding others.
- Leveraging can also identify the aid student's need across their entire academic careers, a key to student retention.

Leveraging could also help determine the universities' effectiveness at managing their tuition waiver allocations. At just under \$3.8M dollars, these waivers can significantly impact enrollment. A leveraging model could help universities utilize waivers to meet enrollment goals for both new students and students the university wishes to retain.

Lastly, how can UA better utilize unused Foundation scholarships (campus or system)? This is a difficult and often thorny question given the individualistic rules surrounding donor's scholarships. Even so, the UA Foundation should investigate what latitude may exist or what changes are needed so that unused scholarships could be used to help other students at UA. For example, would donors be amenable to allowing Chancellors the

discretion to use unused scholarships for helping targeted students - such as students within 15 credits of graduating - but who lack the funds to continue?

During the enrollment summits more than one university identified increased student financial aid as needed to help stabilize enrollments. Helping students pay for their education should be an element of any enrollment plan. However, simply adding more money for scholarships or needs based aid is neither strategic nor sustainable. It is likely that some resources will be needed to shore up our financial aid to students. Before any resources are expended for needs based or other institutional grant aid, the university should strongly consider enlisting the services of outside financial aid consultants to help understand how effective our current practices are and whether financial aid leveraging could help the campuses achieve their enrollment objectives.

IV. Returning adults

Alaska has approximately 115,000¹ adults with some college but no college degree. By comparison, the number of public high school graduates in Alaska has fluctuated between 7,700 to 8,000 students in recent years. Specific data about those adults with some college but no degree is not easily accessible to the universities (unlike a class of high school seniors). These students may be difficult to attract, but they represent a substantial target market that UA must pursue.

This population is typically most concerned over the costs they will incur, transfer of credit, and how to combine school with their work and family responsibilities. This population may also require support in earning credit through alternative means including CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) and credit for prior learning and experience. Additional priorities for the prospective adult student include high-quality teachers, affordable tuition, and gaining workplace-relevant skills and knowledge². With our relatively low four-year tuition, campuses throughout the state, and a robust eLearning system, UA is well suited to attract a significant portion of this population.

Setting aside the question of whether to centralize our efforts at attracting this population or allow each campus to develop their own initiatives, the following elements would seem to be required to successfully attract and enroll these students.

1. **A fast, friendly and efficient 'intake' process.** Through a sophisticated web site or portal application, prospective adult students would be stepped through the initial

¹ A Stronger Nation - Alaska (2016) Lumina Foundation (p. 3)

² IS COLLEGE WORTH IT FOR ME? How Adults Without Degrees Think About Going (Back) to School, A report by Public Agenda, with support from The Kresge Foundation NOVEMBER 2013

intake process in an efficient and professional manner. This high-tech or high touch 'conciierge' approach in the initial engagement with the student would answer their questions, address concerns, and solve onboarding issues. Time might be the most precious commodity to consider when working with the returning adult student. To find specialized intake training, UA might look to industries outside of higher education such as hospitality or banking.

An example of a web site designed to help returning students can be found here:

<https://www.tnreconnect.gov/>

2. **Transfer of credit; credit for prior learning and experience.** Adults with some college but no degree, especially those with prior credits not earned at UA, will be interested in how their credits will transfer. In addition, these students may also be interested in whether they are eligible for experiential credit. Perhaps using technology or a combination of technology and content experts, this information could be provided in a timely manner to serve this population. The following are websites developed to help prospective students determine what credits they might receive for prior learning.

<https://learningcounts.org/>

<http://collegecreditpredictor.org/thec/>

3. **Not one - but all three.** To further help these returning students, the university should work to leverage *all* UA programs so that students complete a degree in as short a time frame as feasible. This requires cooperation of the campuses and the technology to help advisors identify which program(s) from across the university would best suit the student's needs. As noted at the UAS enrollment summit, *Degree Works* might be that technology.
4. **Funding to incentivize completion.** Providing financial support to a student within 30 credits of completing a four-year degree can be accomplished with a relatively small amount of money. This investment would pay big dividends to the student (personal achievement, new job or promotion), the campus (increasing completion rates, a new alumnus) and the state (another well educated and trained worker). Financial aid leveraging may offer some guidance here or perhaps the use of *micro-grants* such as Georgia State's Panther Retention Grants³.

³ Scholarships and grants are discussed in the section on System Initiatives.

V. System Initiatives

The following recommendations are offered as systemic initiatives that would support enrollment across UA. The recommendations begin with the very specific - targeted to the enrollment areas of retention, attainment (completion and graduation) and new student recruitment, and end with broad overarching thoughts for the President to consider.

Retention investments⁴

An investment in **predictive analytics** would help the universities better identify how likely students will persist and remain at the university. These systems also more accurately identify students who are at risk of poor grades and dropout. Georgia State University (GSU) offers a compelling case for the merits of using predictive analytics to help transform a university. GSU has dramatically improved student success rates over the past decade by implementing several initiatives including their predictive analytics, or GPS, short for Georgia State's Graduation and Progression Success system. GSU's six-year graduation rate has increased from 32 percent in 2003 to 54 percent in 2014. During the same period, GSU has made a concerted effort to increase enrollment for traditionally underserved students. Remarkably, the share of GSU students who are Pell eligible nearly doubled, from 31 percent in 2003 to 58 percent in 2013.

GSU worked with EAB (formerly the Education Advisory Board) to mine GSU's data and generate real-time alerts for students at risk of falling off track academically. This was no small undertaking and required substantial investment of time, money and people. GSU analyzed 10 years of data, over 2.5 million grades for 44,000 students, to help develop their model which tracks 30,000 students daily and delivers over 800 analytics based alerts.

UA already invests considerable resources in technology (i.e. - Banner, Blackboard and Degree Works) that capture data on our students. The next step for UA is to effectively harness that data and put it to work by increasing communication between faculty, administrators and students. Such communications delivered in real time lets students know exactly how they are doing and, if needed, what resources are available to keep them on track. Such intrusive or proactive measures allow student support to be targeted and customized to meet the needs of individual students so that campuses can more effectively monitor their progress.

Continue to invest in and make advising stronger at each university. Technology alone will not solve all the issues related to retention or persistence. Increased support for

⁴ On pages 14 & 15 is the list of preliminary investments identified by the universities as part of the enrollment summit discussions.

advising and for advisors was a theme of the university enrollment summits. An investment in **additional advisors** trained in the use of predictive technologies would help UA better serve students - especially those at risk of poor grades and dropout.

Retention and new student recruitment

As already discussed, how and to whom the university provides financial aid are key issues in helping manage our enrollments. A strategic approach to these issues is found in **financial aid leveraging**. An investment in financial aid leveraging will help determine our efficacy in awarding institutional aid. Leveraging would also support recruitment by providing aid packages that yield the optimal mix of students, including those who may not otherwise enroll at the institution. In addition, leveraging would assist with retention by helping close gaps between costs and resources that may prevent students from persisting to degree.

Additional investments for needs based financial aid and micro-grants. In Alaska students from the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder do not go to college. Lack of a college going expectation and costs are barriers to entry. While the state offers a generous need based grant (the Alaska Education Grant) more resources for poor students should be made available.

Micro-grants targeted to students in their last two semesters would be awarded to help students complete their degrees. Patterned after Georgia State's Panther Retention grants, UA micro-grant recipients would be selected using data based on financial need, performance and the likelihood of graduating.

Lower tuition for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. While tuition at the University of Alaska for baccalaureate students remains well below the national average⁵ tuition paid by students enrolled in two-year and certificate programs is considerably higher than the national average. The University should implement a lower per credit hour rate of tuition and/or specific financial aid incentives that reduce student costs for those enrolled in CTE programs.

New student recruitment

Up until last June the State of Alaska provided funding for each high school junior to take either the SAT or ACT. Making the test free across Alaska contributed to the number of test takers increasing by approximately 1400⁶ between 2014 and 2015.

⁵ Trends in College Pricing 2016 (The College Board)

⁶ SAT 362 test takers; ACT 1027 test takers. Total test scores for both tests: 8,056 - this figure undoubtedly includes students who took both tests.

The State's effort was laudable on many fronts - sitting for the SAT or ACT is a milestone for college going - yet research by both the College Board and ACT have identified the fee to take the test and lack of transportation to testing sites on weekends limited participation of underrepresented students and students of limited means.

Additionally, students who sat for the ACT or SAT could use scores from these free test administrations to qualify for one of three levels of the Alaska Performance Scholarship. In AY15, 2959 APS students attended UA applying over \$9.8 million dollars in Performance Scholarship funds⁷ toward their tuition and fees.

UA should pick up where the state left off and pay for every high school junior in the state to sit for either the SAT or ACT test. This initiative has tangible benefits aside from those already discussed. For example, UA could receive all score reports and the interest inventory that each student completes as part of the testing process. This information - which includes contact information, co-curricular and academic interests would be shared with the campuses so that all Alaska high school juniors who took an exam could be added to the CRM and folded into the university's communication plans.

In addition, paying for the test administration would continue to leverage the APS monies that would flow to the University from students who earned those scholarships in part based on their test scores.

Dual Enrollment

A recent report by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) points to dual enrollment as a strategy universities across the country are turning to increase student access and success.

Dual enrollment courses and programs have been found by many to provide students with a wide range of potential benefits (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Webb & Mayka, 2011; Cassidy, Keating & Young, 2011; Karp, 2012; Barnett & Kim, 2014)⁸ including:

- Helping prepare students for the academic rigors of college;
- Providing information to students about the skills that they will need to succeed in college;
- Promoting relationships between colleges and high schools;
- Providing a college course experience to traditionally underserved populations;

⁷ UAR 2016, Table 1.45 p. 80

⁸ Dual Enrollment in the Context of Strategic Enrollment Management *An insight into practice at U.S. institutions* Wendy Kilgore, Ph.D., Director of Research, AACRAO & Alexander Taylor, Research Intern 2016

- Contributing to a college-going culture in the school district;
- Providing an accelerated pathway to a college degree;
- Enabling students to become accustomed to the college environment (when the DE course is offered on the college campus);
- Increasing the likelihood of graduating from high school and enrolling in college;
- Increasing the rigor of career and technical programs, thereby better preparing students for the workforce; and
- Building college awareness for those not typically considering college.

Similar findings from the University of Pittsburgh⁹ show that in addition to earning low-cost college credits, students receive college-related benefits. Academic research and state data suggest that high school students in concurrent enrollment programs:

- Are more likely to meet college-readiness benchmarks;
- Achieve a lower likelihood of college placement into remedial English or math;
- Attain higher four- and six-year college completion rates; and
- Accomplish a shorter average time to bachelor's degree completion for those completing in six years or less.

Many of the purported benefits of dual enrollment would address some of the current challenges the University of Alaska faces. In particular DE would promote a college going culture, enhance relationships between the university and secondary schools, serve underrepresented populations, reduce the likelihood of remedial placement and increase college completion rates.

Attainment (graduation and completion)

The system office should support degree completion initiatives on the universities and campuses. Whether it is UAS's Finish College Alaska or similar efforts at the other campuses, UA should invest resources that help campuses identify and work with undergraduate students who stopped out and are within 30 credits of a bachelor's degree or 15 credits of an associate degree. Investments in staffing, financial aid or technology (as described next) would help campuses increase the number of students that graduate and improve campus graduation rates.

Modifying Degree Works to allow students the ability to conduct *what-if* scenarios for any degree within the UA system. Currently in *Degree Works*, *what-if* scenarios allow students to explore how their earned credits apply *to degrees at the university* to which they are

⁹ <http://www.asundergrad.pitt.edu/chs/research>

admitted. Thus a student admitted to the Kuskokwim Campus can run what-if scenarios for Kuskokwim, and all other UAF campuses. But that same student could not easily run *what-if* scenarios for programs at UAA or UAS campuses. By expanding the capability of *Degree Works* to consider all degrees at UA, students will be able to explore and identify more options under which they might complete a degree.

Track 4-year graduation rates and retention rates for all classes of formally admitted degree seeking students. UA already tracks 6-year graduation rates and freshman retention rates. However, this captures only a portion of the enrollment behavior of UA's students. Before the university can address retention and graduation we need to have the data to fully understand how all of our students flow through or drop out of the system.

The Office of Academic Affairs and Research could convene an annual System-wide conference on graduation rates at UA. Each institution would be invited to send delegations to attend the conference. Renowned experts on graduation and persistence could be invited to share best practices. Successful campus efforts could be celebrated and rewarded (funded). New system initiatives could be discussed and developed.

Overarching Concepts

A strong statement from the Board of Regents announcing their intention to see improvements in retention, graduation and new student enrollment rates for undergraduates. This statement should recognize that student characteristics, and many campus characteristics, are not under the control of administrators, and that even with hard work, uniformly high increases in all enrollment areas are unlikely. Moreover, this statement should recognize that even immediate reforms would not generate overnight results. Losses in enrollment did not occur overnight. Similarly, the gains we strive for may take several years to materialize.

Enrollment Scorecard. As the President did with issues related to Title IX, an Enrollment Scorecard should be developed and shared regularly with the BOR. This scorecard (like the TIX Scorecard) should be developed by a system team comprised of content experts and reflect the goals and metrics of the universities enrollment planning efforts.

VI. Conclusion & Next Steps

Results will not be quick. The variables involved in increasing retention, graduation and new student enrollment are numerous and not all of them are within the control of the institution. In addition, it may take years to see the effect of the measures that we begin today. Progress will occur, albeit over time. UA should focus on building the universities' capacity for serving our enrollments - whether retaining, graduating or recruiting. This

long-term approach requires resources, leadership and perhaps most of all a steadfast commitment to improving all aspects of student enrollment at the University of Alaska.

- Nov. 17, 2016** This draft plan will be shared with the campus leadership for input, refinement and ground *truthing*. In addition, assigning individuals or groups to described tasks and quantifying investments (dollar amounts) called for.
- Dec. 7** Finalize planning document
- Dec. 9** Share plan with Summit Team
- Jan. 2017** Share plan with BOR at their Retreat
- Jan.** Work with universities to complete enrollment plans
- Jan.** Present final plan to Summit Team
- Jan.** Begin implementation

UAA, UAF & UAS list of preliminary investments to increase enrollment					
University	Initiative/Request	Retention, Recruitment, Completion	Amount	Personnel	Base
UAA	Develop a well-integrated advising strategy that builds from required advising/orientation for first time students prior to their first registration.*	Retention	\$82,000	1.0 FTE Senior Coordinator of Academic Advising	Base
UAA	Comprehensive retention management tool (e.g., Retention Rx)	Retention / Completion	\$100,000	1.0 FTE Salesforce programmer and report writer	Base
UAA	Targeted recruitment marketing - multimedia - Southcentral Alaska	Recruitment	\$200,000		Base
UAA	Recruitment Scholarships for returning learners	Recruitment	\$100,000		Base
UAA	College specific student recruitment print materials - branded series	Recruitment	\$40,000		
UAA	Marketing communications analysis*	Recruitment	\$61,500		
UAA	Marketing and recruitment consulting & modeling*	Recruitment	\$144,000		
UAA	Student Recruitment & Community Outreach Coordinator	Recruitment	\$89,800	1.0 FTE, 11 months	Base
UAA	Enhanced Search Strategies* - high school sophomore, junior and senior campaigns	Recruitment	\$109,000		Base

UA Enrollment Planning Report
 - Working copy - Fall 2016

University	Initiative/Request	Retention, Recruitment, Completion	Amount	Personnel	Base
UAF	Retention scholarships:	Retention / Completion	\$75,000		
UAF	Additional Comprehensive Advising Support:	Retention / Completion	\$100,000		
UAF	Supplemental Instruction	Retention / Completion	\$40,000		
UAF	Microtargeting	Recruitment	\$100,000	1.0 FTE Planner/Strategist	Base
			\$75,000	1.0 FTE Data analyst	Base
UAF	Recruiting scholarships	Recruitment	\$75,000		
UAF	CTC Recruitment and Career Development Specialist	Recruitment	\$114,000		
UAS	Social Media Coordinator	Recruitment	\$100,000	1 0 FTE Staff & 1 student worker	Base
UAS	Social Media / Name Buys	Recruitment	\$50,000		
UAS	Housing Awards / Scholarships (for UA Scholars/Alaska Performance Scholars)	Recruitment	\$150,000		
UAS	Comprehensive Advising	Retention / Completion	\$75,000		
UAS	Retention Scholarships	Retention / Completion	\$50,000		
UAS	Student Mentorship Program	Retention / Completion	\$25,000		
<i>*Ruffalo Noel-Levitz contract services</i>		Totals	\$1,955,300	7.0 FTE; 1 student worker	