

# Governance Report

December 2015



UNIVERSITY  
of ALASKA  
*Many Traditions One Alaska*

## Coalition of Student Leaders

Mathew Carrick, Chair

The Coalition of Student Leaders completed its annual fall retreat in Anchorage, immediately following the November Board of Regents' (BOR) meeting. Students from across the state came together to present testimony to the Regents on a wide variety of issues, ranging from tuition to Title IX. The next day, we discussed student issues, leadership development, and other such issues amongst ourselves and with visitors. We are especially grateful to University of Alaska leaders including President Jim Johnsen; Chancellor Tom Case; Vice President Dan White; Associate Vice President Chris Christensen; Chief Strategy, Planning and Budget Officer Michelle Rizk; and others who spent time listening to student concerns and sharing thoughts.

Following the retreat, we look forward to a productive year. We are delighted to have an engaged, thoughtful, and vigorous membership, who will bring fresh perspectives and ideas to system governance.

This year, we're pleased to bring a few special projects forward:

- We have reached the endowment goal for the **Alaska Advantage Incentive Program**, a scholarship initiated by a personal donation from former System Governance Executive Officer Pat Ivey and furthered by donations from student governments as well as individuals. Although it will be some years before the Coalition can begin offering scholarships from this fund, a committee has been established to raise funds that may be disbursed immediately.
- We have formed a **Community Campus Tuition Working Group** to address questions over the ways that the University of Alaska administers the fee and tuition structure at community campuses and technical or vocational college units. The working group will compile research from outside sources, discuss the matter with internal University of Alaska personnel, and issue recommendations for moving forward. We hope that our efforts will help inform debates and lead to better outcomes for all students.
- Next February, students from across the state will be traveling to Juneau for the **Legislative Advocacy Affairs Conference**, where we will lobby for increased University funding from the Alaska legislature. We are dedicated to presenting a strong, professional front that will lead to concrete results. We believe that student efforts to lobby the legislature are vital to ensuring continuing University funding, and we will also be pursuing other lobbying options such as letter-writing campaigns.

We have an active Coalition, and over the next year we will be bringing forth more ideas, efforts, and proposals to improve the University. We are excited for the opportunity to improve our communities and grateful for the chance to work together with faculty, staff, administrators, and each other.

*Mathew was born in Florida but considers Alaska his adopted home. He attends the University of Alaska Fairbanks, working toward a degree in economics with minors in mathematics and political science. He also serves as the president of the Associated Students of UAF.*

*The Coalition of Student Leaders consists of student government representatives from the University of Alaska campuses and portrays the diverse scope of student affairs and needs. The Coalition promotes the educational needs, general welfare and rights of all University of Alaska students, and functions as an advisory group to the UA president and administration on student issues.*

## **Faculty Alliance**

Dr. Cécile Lardon, Chair

The changes in leadership at the statewide and university levels have had and will continue to have a deep impact on how the system governance groups orient themselves and set their priorities for this year. The Faculty Alliance is aware that the University of Alaska (UA) system is likely to undergo significant changes to adapt to Alaska's ongoing financial crisis.

### *Continuing Projects:*

The Faculty Alliance continues to work with the four statewide taskforces to align math, English, and GER requirements and the academic calendar across the UA system. You received their interim or final reports in the spring. The GER taskforce has made substantial progress and has submitted a proposal the Faculty Alliance is discussing before making a recommendation. I hope to be able to report on the proposal at the time of the Board meeting.

### *Intensified Focus:*

Four Faculty Alliance members (Tara Smith, Maren Haavig, Diane Hirshberg, and Cécile Lardon) will be serving on the taskforces set up to work on the priority areas identified by the Board. By the time of the December Board meeting the taskforces will have begun their work.

There are currently several ideas being discussed within the UA system that could have significant impacts on how faculty teach their courses, including increased distance-delivered courses and programs, and "redesigned" courses modeled after the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT). While there is nothing fundamentally wrong with these ideas—and the Alliance recognizes that we need to be creative and open in our thinking about how we deliver our programs in the future—it is also the case that both the improvements and savings of any educational innovation hinge on its fit with the system and its implementation in a particular context. For example, distance education can be as high quality as face-to-face education but not for every student and not if it fails to create an active learning environment. Providing online students with equivalent access to faculty and other university resources is not less expensive than providing them face-to-face. The work done by faculty and staff in an online scenario is different, but not cheaper. In fact, additional supports may need to be developed to assist online students with their studies (e.g., advising, financial aid, etc.). The members of the Faculty Alliance will educate themselves on the ideas generated within the UA system, will discuss them and provide input where appropriate. The Alliance will also present additional ideas to be considered by the university administration. We hope that efficiency and cost savings will not gain priority over quality.

The Faculty Alliance will hold its annual retreat in January immediately following the January BOR retreat. We hope to see and talk with you at that time and in a more relaxed setting.

*Dr. Cécile Lardon is a professor of Psychology and chair of the Department of Psychology in the School of Liberal Arts at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Originally from Germany, Dr. Lardon earned her PhD from the University of Illinois Chicago (1999) in community, organizational, and social psychology. Her research has focused on community leadership, community and organizational development and change, organizational culture, and health promotion. Currently, Dr. Lardon is a researcher at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research. She joined the UAF faculty in 1999.*

*Faculty Alliance is the faculty voice in matters affecting the academic welfare of the University of Alaska system and its educational programs.*

## **Staff Alliance**

Faye Gallant, Chair

Staff Alliance met November 10 through Google Hangout and teleconference. The Alliance received an update on the FY17 budget planning process from Chief Strategy, Planning and Budget Officer Michelle Rizk, and heard remarks on governance from Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research Dan White. We commend the administration and the Regents for recognizing the value of fair pay for employees, regardless of union representation.

The Alliance discussed the recent resignations of the Chief Human Resources Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, as well as the need for governance involvement in filling these critical positions. Staff-driven initiatives (such as changing leave share regulations, leadership development, and layoff reviews) pending in Human Resources will require additional focus so as not to be lost during this transition.

We also discussed the Statewide Transformation Team report and the next steps in reviewing and implementing the team's recommendations. Staff governance leaders hope to be actively engaged in the subcommittees moving forward, recognizing that the proposed changes will significantly impact staff.

While staff across the UA system are feeling the strain of budget cuts through unfilled positions, increases in the volume of work, the loss of friends and coworkers, and uncertainty about the future, they remain committed to advancing the mission of the university and being actively engaged in its transformation.

*Faye Gallant came to Alaska in 2003 as an undergraduate at UAF, where she earned her Bachelor's in Geography (2006). She started her UAF career in 2009 and currently works for the Office of Management and Budget. She has a Master's of Public Administration from UAS (2013) and is an active member of UAF's Process Improvement team. When she's not working, Faye travels the world with her husband, gets walked by her dogs, or heads to the hills around Fairbanks to hike and camp.*

*Staff Alliance serves the classified and administrative, professional and technical staff throughout the University of Alaska system.*

## **System Governance Council**

Rachel Morse, Chair

This is my last report as chair of System Governance Council (SGC). Thank you for the privilege to serve in this capacity. The opportunity to participate in Board of Regents meetings directly is impactful. If I could advocate for anything with you—it would be to figure out more ways for more people to meet you, share with you and hear from you.

As we roll into next semester (it seems like this semester just started), the SGC is examining two important issues: increasing participation with UA leadership and understanding the role of alumni on SGC.

### *Increasing participation with UA Leadership:*

We have witnessed the BOR successfully tap the participation of faculty senate on committees such as the common calendar and general education requirement to the benefit of the committee's work. This is commendable. However, you have not utilized the other governance groups to the same extent—Coalition of Student Leaders, Staff Alliance and the alumni associations. Please consider

how best to do that. Engage these groups in a forward thinking conversation about how best to utilize our participation. We are an incredible resource; collectively we have the working knowledge of every aspect of university life and we share your dedication to the institution. Having staff, students and alumni participate alongside faculty ensures your committees have access to those most impacted by your decisions. It will most likely help with the number one complaint regarding slow turnaround on feedback from governance groups. We are often not fully informed about what is moving through the decision process such that receiving representative feedback is time consuming. If we are the committees our governance groups are naturally more plugged in, informed and in touch with what is happening and more readily able to comment. Though we are making improvements on this process, service on the BOR committees could greatly enhance decision-making and feedback.

#### *The role of Alumni on SGC:*

Except regarding the impacts on our alma mater's reputations and the esteem for our degrees, alumni are not directly impacted by the decisions of the BOR. Our role on SGC is often to provide the alumni context to the discussions of SGC. We have the student perspective through the lens of having made it to the other side. We are less in touch with the day-to-day understanding of running the university. However, we are an important voice for you to hear.

Alumni remind the institution of the core principles upon which the university was founded. The voice of alumni is often important to projecting a future that is true to the basic values of the institution, those principles that keep UA, UA. Alumni help institution leaders realize their hopes and aspirations for the university. UA graduates can provide multi-faceted support to enhance and sustain the University's success by aiding it in the political arena, by assisting in acquiring the best and brightest students, by assuring ongoing visibility within the state and region, by developing career paths for graduates, by supporting an annual giving appeal, among many other ways. Alumni validate the mission of a university. In their roles throughout the state, country, and world, they are the living embodiment of what the UA produces as an educational "product." And in recent rhetoric of the leadership you are clearly counting on our help to make it through this budget season and on to our future of excellence.

We are the only governance group that does not automatically testify before the BOR. You have been fortunate to hear from an alumni relations director this past year because one of the alumni directors has been the chair of SGC. If I am not replaced with another alumni director, access to the alumni voice is not automatic at BOR meetings. In addition, each alumni association has a seat on the System Governance Council as opposed to the other governance groups who elect two members across the universities. So how we would bring the collective alumni voice to you is a bit of quagmire. System Governance Council and particularly the alumni directors are committed to sorting this out and, at some point in the near future, providing recommendations to the BOR for how to best access this alumni resource. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out across the divide and request our participation, our testimony and our input as you need it.

Thank you.

*Rachel Morse is originally from Louisville, Kentucky, but has lived in Alaska since 1999. She has spent the past decade working with rural communities on projects that include environmental stewardship, housing, early childhood education and other social services. Rachel served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Zimbabwe. She has a master's degree in business administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a master's degree in forestry and natural resources management from Purdue University.*

*The System Governance Council consists of the leaders from Faculty Alliance, Staff Alliance, and Coalition of Student Leaders and includes the alumni directors from the three UA universities. The Council provides the setting for collaboration on University of Alaska system-wide issues.*