

Governance Report

February 2016



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Mathew Carrick, Chair

The Coalition of Student Leaders is just now entering the Spring semester and reassembling after winter break to bring new ideas and energies to shared governance. In the coming months we will be focusing almost entirely on the Alaskan state budget and what it means for the University of Alaska.

At the end of this month, student leaders from across the state will be in Juneau to relate how important the University of Alaska is to our own lives and to the future of the state. This will present us with an opportunity to learn, network, and of course support the University. We will be going not as individual campuses concerned with separate needs but as one university advocating for the welfare of all students.

Even though the University of Alaska is facing significant cuts and difficult choices, I have faith that we will be resilient and resourceful in overcoming our challenges. I want to thank the administration and the Board of Regents for their continued consultation of students in dealing with difficult choices. However, I urge administrators to extend even deeper into asking students for contributions and input. Students are the lifeblood and ultimate reason for the University and have a “boots-on-the-ground” perspective to learn from anywhere else. I hope that in the coming years students will always be a primary source when it comes to asking which academic or student life programs to prioritize or set aside.

The Spring semester is always an exciting time for students. May will bring radical changes to many of our Coalition members such as new jobs, a fresh perspective, or even graduation. Although some of us will be leaving the Coalition and others will be joining for the first time, I know that the University of Alaska and shared governance hold special places in all of our hearts and minds, and that we will advocate for the University with all of our strength. I see the challenges ahead as an opportunity to test and build the skills, innovative thinking, and leadership that we have developed at the University of Alaska.

Mathew was born in Florida but considers Alaska his adopted home. He attends the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and recently completed a degree in economics with a minor in mathematics. 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 Faculty Alliance held a retreat on January 23, 2016. Due to the fiscal crisis and the upcoming freeze on travel, we decided to hold the retreat via video conference. We recognize the need to develop alternate meeting formats that work. Regular Alliance meetings are conducted via Google Hangouts, and the Alliance has a Google site to store and share documents, resources, and other materials. For our retreat, we utilized the Google site plus a web-based tool for group brainstorming, prioritizing, decision-making, and action planning. While these technologies cannot quite replace the benefits of a face-to-face meeting, they can function well enough. As faculty increasingly venture into web-based teaching, we can also contribute to developing ways for better distance-held meetings. Some of the things we, and especially I as the facilitator, learned from this first experiment include:

1. Long meetings by video take more effort than face-to-face meetings.
2. It is more difficult to maintain full group engagement by video.
3. While technology can certainly facilitate work processes, it can also slow things down.
4. Group exercises and activities that are relatively simple to facilitate face-to-face are much more complex online. Even the dynamics of a group of people who know each other fairly well change in an online format. And the amount of time each exercise or activity takes is quite different.
5. On a positive note, web-based tools produce a record of the work the group conducted that can be used to guide future meetings.
6. Not having to travel for the meeting eases some of the time pressure we all feel.

Moving to a web-based and video-delivered format definitely presents challenges and requires all participants to learn to engage differently. This will take some time. However, a variety of free or inexpensive tools are available to try. While some will prove to be only marginally helpful, others may make a big difference in how productive we can be and how we experience the interaction.

The members of the Faculty Alliance would like to thank President Johnsen and the members of the Summit Team to join us for the first portion of our retreat. Their contributions helped set the stage for the rest of the day – and we welcome the open exchange around important topics facing the university.

During the retreat the Faculty Alliance worked toward articulating our vision for the university system in the future, to identify opportunities and responsibilities for faculty leadership, and to set short- and long-term goals. Here are some highlights.

Our **vision** for the university system included:

- A university structure with a smaller administration in which faculty have meaningful input in decision-making.
- A university system that offers excellent education in a variety of formats and offers accessibility to students.
- We envision more collaboration across campuses and more specialization of each campus.
- Increased interdisciplinary research capacity.

In terms of faculty **leadership**, the Alliance sees **opportunities** to:

- Work more closely with the administration (at each campus and at statewide).

- Collaborate with student and staff leaders.
- Communicate with and educate other faculty.
- Provide leadership on difficult issues.
- Educate Alaskans about the value of UA and higher education.

At the same time, the members of the Alliance see a **responsibility** to:

- Lead an ongoing conversation about shared governance.
- Represent broad perspectives on issues.
- Be fiscally responsible.
- Model responsible, collaborative, data-based decision-making.
- Advocate for students and faculty.
- Mentor other faculty.
- Communicate broadly and effectively.

Finally, we identified **short-term and long-term goals**. There was not much time left in the day, so these will need to be developed more. However, consistent with our vision of the university system and with our conceptualization of faculty leadership we aim to find ways to be more involved in decision-making and to actively participate in the development of the five principles articulated by the Board of Regents. With a view toward the future, the Alliance also aims to facilitate more faculty engagement on all campuses, become more engaged in long-term planning, and have more interactions with the Board.

Continuing Projects:

The Faculty Alliance will continue to work with the four statewide taskforces to align math, English, and general GER requirements and the academic calendar across the UA system. And individual members of the Alliance will continue to serve on the Board of Regents' taskforces.

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 did not meet in January, however, staff were gratified to see their proposed changes to the leave share regulations accepted and implemented, fixing two issues with the leave share program. This program allows staff to donate sick leave to their coworkers who have a qualifying FML event and who have exhausted all other leave sources, going without pay.

Previously, this program could not be used for bereavement leave, which meant that an employee who had already lost pay while caring for a family member with a terminal illness would not be eligible for any leave donations in the immediate aftermath. With these changes, employees can receive and use sick leave for ten days after the death of an immediate family member (five days of bereavement leave and another five days for arranging and attending the funeral). This important change allows staff to support each other during their most difficult times.

The second change to the program allows the use of leave share when an employee is on intermittent leave. Previously, any time an employee came back to work, even if just for an hour, the clock would reset on the qualification for the program. The new change recognizes that it may be in the best interest of the employee and the university to return to work briefly, and does not penalize employees for doing so.

Other issues on the Staff Alliance agenda recently were the opening of nominations for the Staff Make Students Count award, the approval of revisions to our constitution and bylaws, and initial meetings of the compensation committee.

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

Monique Musick, Chair

The goal of the System Governance Council this year is use our time together to address issues that benefit from the perspectives provided by the unique composition of this group: students, faculty, staff and alumni meeting and deliberating together. In this forum, we provide not just a systemwide perspective, but the system perspective of all of the key groups within the university community. We aim to work both as a sounding board for ideas and proposals moving forward, and as an avenue of communication and feedback to and from our constituents.

Coordinating legislative advocacy efforts, especially of students and alumni in Juneau; addressing the rapid structural and cultural changes the university is undergoing right now; assisting in locating ambassadors, models of success and critical partners in the joint effort of telling the story of the university's impact on our state; and acting as critical sounding boards for leadership are just a few ways that the council contributes to the university.

We are thankful for President Johnsen's presence at our meetings and willingness to communicate with us during these rapidly changing times, and of his support of the governance system. These times are not easy, and we know not everyone will be pleased with all directions taken as we move forward, but we are here to provide what benefit we can, and offer our service and counsel in good faith for the benefit of the university, Board of Regents, students and State of Alaska.

Monique Musick was born and raised in Ester, Alaska. After attending ICS and later Lathrop High School, she received a bachelor's of art in journalism from UAF. She currently works for UA Public Affairs doing what she enjoys most: photography, communications and graphic design. She became involved with governance in 2009 shortly after coming to UA Statewide and has enjoyed being an active member of System Governance ever since. She values the opportunity afforded through shared governance to support co-workers, participate in policy review, advise on changes in the university and to advocate on behalf of staff throughout the system. She recently purchased her old family home in Ester and enjoys gardening, photography, motor sports, outdoor activities, prospecting, music and time with friends.

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.