

Governance Report

June 2016



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Mathew Carrick, Chair

At our last meeting of the academic year, the Coalition of Student Leaders passed two resolutions of note: one to support the inclusion of Alaska Native Studies courses in the General Education Requirements (GER) and one to support mandatory classes on campus safety and sexual assault prevention. Both resolutions enjoyed the unanimous support of our attending members, and we believe the two topics are of the utmost importance as we move forward.

Alaska Native Studies are critical to the history, present, and future of the University of Alaska. As Alaskans, we have an obligation to understand those who were here before us, and this knowledge may provide critical insights into overcoming the challenges of the modern world. As students, we come to a university to learn not just technical trades but to develop ourselves as citizens of Alaska and the world. Alaska Native Studies has a crucial role to play in enhancing the University of Alaska's curriculum, and we urge the Board of Regents to include the subject in the GER.

Campus safety is of significant importance to all students at the University of Alaska: we cannot learn if we are not safe. While University leaders have taken great strides in improving campus safety – something we are all thankful for – there is still much ground to cover. One idea suggested by President Johnsen is to introduce a mandatory one-credit class for all degree-seeking students that would introduce students to the importance of campus safety, resources available to survivors, and ways to make our culture safer. The Coalition of Student Leaders supports this idea, with the caveat that the course should be freely available and take up a decently small amount of time to avoid overly burdening busy students.

At our last meeting, President Johnsen and Vice President White spoke to students about summer plans. While most of the Coalition leaders will be unavailable during the summer, President Johnsen expressed plans to include student leaders in decision processes. We appreciate his commitment to shared governance and look forward to working with him throughout the summer as an active student body.

After the summer months have ended, we will hold our annual retreat in September. There, the Coalition will elect a new chair and vice chair who will represent the UA student body throughout the 2016-17 year. I wish them luck – being on the Coalition has been educational and enjoyable, and will only be increasingly important as we rise to the challenges and opportunities of the next year.

Mathew was born in Florida but considers Alaska his adopted home. He attends the University of Alaska Fairbanks, recently graduating with a degree in economics, and now pursues a Master's in Business Administration. He served as the president of the Associated Students of UAF for AY2016.

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

It has been an eventful year for everyone at the University of Alaska! For faculty, the most salient impacts of the budget crisis have been things like teaching bigger course sections with less support, teaching more courses while also needing to do more service-related tasks and/or needing to bring in more research grants, losing jobs (especially term-funded and adjunct faculty) or losing colleagues, even losing whole programs. Many, if not most, faculty have long been working quite a bit more than a 40-hour work week, often giving up evenings and weekends to make sure our students receive timely feedback or get the help they need to succeed, or to conduct the research we cannot get to during the week. Many faculty have also long worked summers off contract because they just could not get everything done during the contract period. We accept this, for the most part, as a condition of working in a full-time academic position. But the pressure has increased significantly, and I hear many more stories from colleagues about stress-related health conditions. Local physicians have confirmed this perception. We, and other university employees, are faced with contradictory demands, such as ‘teach more and also bring in more research grants’, ‘increase online course offerings, but OIT will be cut significantly’, and ‘increase your class sizes and also individualize your teaching more’.

I am reporting this simply as a statement of fact that I would like to be part of the record. I know that the Board and the university leaders have worked incredibly hard to secure as much funding for the UA system as possible and to minimize the damage to the system. And I know that every group of employee, including administrators, have been impacted by this situation. I also know that those of us who still have a job are privileged in many ways. And I know that every position lost impacts not just that individual but a family and a community. This is especially palpable in the smaller communities where every job is important and not easily replaced. So I am not asking the Board, or the President, or the Chancellors and Provosts, to do the impossible, but to be mindful of inadvertently creating conditions that drive away our best and most creative people and that will set us up to simply “hunker down” instead of moving forward in the best way we can. I know... easier said than done. But every group of employees can help figure this out.

Recent Actions Taken by the Faculty Alliance:

1. We renewed the charge to the General GER Alignment Taskforce and are clarifying with President Johnsen and VP White how these types of assignments initiated by the Board should be handled within the governance structure.
2. We have also requested that the General GER Alignment Taskforce make a recommendation regarding the addition of a course on Alaska Native history and culture to the GER requirements. We have asked for a recommendation to the Faculty Alliance by the end of September so the Alliance can bring a proposal to the President and the Board at the following Board meeting.
3. There is a beginning discussion of faculty overload benefit rates. Full-time faculty benefit rates are higher than most other groups of employees, for a variety of reasons, including health care benefits for the months we are not on contract. We are exploring the need for **overtime** benefit rates to also be at this higher level. The reason this issue has been raised is that full-time faculty are sometimes seen as “too expensive” to teach additional courses, not because of their salary, but because of the benefit rates associated with their position. This means that courses are taught by adjuncts, rather than by faculty who are most familiar with the mission of the department and with the students.
4. We invited Karl Kowalski to join our last meeting of the year to talk about the transition to a single instance version of Blackboard. The faculty at UAA and UAS were concerned with the

process of this conversion, especially with having access to their courses for the fall semester. We will continue the dialogue and appreciate the willingness of Mr. Kowalski to provide more information. Three faculty appointed by the Alliance will attend a 2-day IT workshop in June.

Finally...

This is my last governance report. Tara Smith from UAA will take over as Faculty Alliance Chair in the fall. The experience I have gained this year was incredibly valuable and will influence me in other leadership roles in the future. It has been both rewarding and challenging, especially since I have faced issues related to the budget crisis in my role as department chair at the same time. I end my year as chair of the Faculty Alliance with a much greater appreciation for the systemic dynamics and influences on my experience at the department level. I also have gained greater respect for what it takes to lead this institution into the future. And I come away with a strong conviction that faculty and staff need to take on leadership roles throughout the system so they are more involved in day-to-day decision making. I know that I have led, and continue to lead, my department with a very different understanding and sense of direction and priorities. That can put faculty leaders in an awkward position with colleagues (as I have found out many times), but having informed faculty leaders at all levels can significantly help move this system forward in a constructive way. If I had more time as Alliance Chair, I would make faculty leadership development a priority.

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 provided feedback to the interim Chief Human Resources Office and President Johnsen on the proposed changes to the furlough regulations, stressing the importance of communicating with governance, reviewing the process to understand impacts, and including a limit to the allowable number of furlough days. While furloughs may be a better option for staff in some areas of the university than other budget strategies like layoffs, it is critical that staff know and are able to plan for the worst-case scenario for their income in the coming year.

Uncertainty around the budget and the impacts of Strategic Pathways and Statewide Transition continues to cause anxiety among our staff members. Staff Alliance is looking forward to being involved in the Strategic Pathways teams beginning this summer, and is following the budget planning process closely. Monique Musick provided a useful summary of the Statewide Transition Team outcomes.

At our May meeting, we discussed the System Governance Council's legislative update from Chris Christensen, and reviewed the public version of the Feldman Report on Title IX issues, as well as the forthcoming revisions to Title IX policies.

At the time of this report, Alliance members are drafting two further items:

1. A recommendation that any salary increases for staff be at least partially comprised of a step increase, rather than purely across the board;
2. Feedback on proposed changes to regulations defining extended temporary employees.

Officer elections for the 2016-2017 year will occur at the Staff Alliance annual retreat in July.

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 System Governance Council held its final meeting of the academic year on May 9 concluding a highly productive and informative year of collaboration and coordination among statewide governance leaders and alumni representatives.

The ability to provide public testimony from locations across the state as opposed to solely in person is supported by the entire council and the groups they represent. As technologies for remote testimony improve, and reduced funds for travel restrict that option, it makes sense to re-evaluate public testimony opportunities. Decisions to not hold meetings at community campuses due to budget restrictions further limits community access to the Board of Regents. The council strongly supports allowing video, audio and other means of access to provide constituents from throughout Alaska an opportunity to testify before the board.

The council also discussed the delay of proposed changes to university policy to bring UA into compliance with Federal guidelines currently being led by the Title IX working group. The decision to wait until September to allow time for full review and discussion was supported by the group.

Along with the rest of the University community, system governance leaders are eager for more information on the next phase of Strategic Pathways, clarity on participation in the review process, and the release of information on the metrics and data that will guide the restructuring. Although this was the last meeting of the year, governance leaders will stay in touch as needed to provide governance involvement moving forward. However since we are not active over the summer the System Governance council will not be collecting feedback directly.

It has been a privilege to work with the other governance leaders, university administration and regents during this term as chair. Thank you for supporting a vibrant governance presence at UA.

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.