

# Governance Report

September 2016



UNIVERSITY  
of ALASKA  
*Many Traditions One Alaska*

## Coalition of Student Leaders

Sam Erickson, USUAA President  
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David Russell-Jensen USUAS-JC President

The Coalition of Student Leaders thanks the Board of Regents for the opportunity to present this report. The summer of 2016 was a period of significant change by the University, and student leaders from all campuses were grateful to be involved in the discussion. Below is a brief summary of student government activities on the three main campuses over the summer.

ASUAF has been largely focused on informing students on the single accreditation and Strategic Pathways process. ASUAF has found that UAF student opinion is split on single accreditation/ Strategic Pathways, and that students across the board lack sufficient information to reach informed opinions.

USUAA has sent executive representation to the Strategic Pathways team meetings and kept the body informed through the summer. In addition, the Union has taken on a series of road cleanups on Anchorage's 36th Avenue as a public service project and staffed booths at campus events such as Goosefest to distribute information to students. The organization has also added several new members over the summer and improved functionality by appointing multiple students to committees and boards across campus.

USUAS-JC is starting the year with new students and will be focusing on building capacity and increasing our presence at UAS and in the larger UA community. USUAS believes UAS students remain largely under-aware on single accreditation and Strategic Pathways.

Moving forward from these accomplishments, there remains much work to be done, and the Coalition is committed to ensuring that the primary stakeholder in the University of Alaska—students—are heard and represented in that process.

At its upcoming fall summit, the Coalition will consider several items. Foremost on the agenda is continuing student involvement with Strategic Pathways, considering both methods of informing the student body and identifying areas with the potential for greater collaboration with administration. On the academic front, the Coalition will consider how best to continue implementation of Resolutions 16-03 and 16-04 calling for the creation of a Native Studies GER and a mandatory campus safety course, respectively. The Coalition will also further review and discuss Dr. Thomas' report on single accreditation to determine if such an approach would be in the best interest of students.

In conclusion, the Coalition is highly optimistic for the upcoming year, and the future of the University of Alaska. Large decisions loom, certainly, but those decisions present large

opportunities. If student-driven processes are pursued for student-centered results, the Coalition firmly believes that the University's best days are still ahead.

*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**

Tara Smith, Chair

Faculty Alliance members participated on all seven of the Strategic Pathways teams this summer, as well as on the Statewide Academic Council, Statewide IT Governance Council, and on the statewide GER coordination project. We value the existing statewide commitments to shared governance and will continue to seek opportunities to contribute to our institutions and the system.

Faculty Alliance held a retreat in Anchorage on August 14 and 15. At that meeting, we welcomed our three new members: Megan Buzby, Sharon Chamard, and Christopher Fallen. We focused a great deal of our discussion on the Strategic Pathways process. We compiled our recommendations for Phases 2 & 3 Strategic Pathways based on our experiences in Phase 1 and will have shared those with President Johnsen by August 21.

Further, we examined the report compiled by Dana Thomas, "An Assessment of Single versus Three Separate Accreditations." The Faculty Alliance members all voiced support for this portion of the recommendation on page 7:

"Single accreditation is neither necessary nor sufficient to achieve cost savings, enhance the student experience, or improve state higher education performance measures. In addition, the process to merge UA's institutions would be disruptive, take at least two years, and might not be approved by the Commission. Therefore, undertaking an accreditation merger at this time is not recommended."

We have begun compiling our responses and recommendations on the many suggestions and topics addressed in the accreditation report, and we look forward to hearing from our colleagues and respective senates before completing our collective feedback on these. We are encouraging faculty to give their input via the survey on the Statewide Office of Academic Affairs and Research webpage, as well.

Also during the retreat, we approved a motion to renew the statewide faculty group that aligned the ACCUPLACER Alignment group to reexamine that tool for the purposes of English course placement. The charge to the group requests their report and recommendations by December 15, 2016, so that it may inform the renegotiations of the ACCUPLACER contract in the spring. Faculty Alliance was not asked to coordinate the discussion for mathematics as the pilot project and discussions have long been underway.

Our retreat allowed us to start the year with a full accounting of the projects already underway and gave us a shared understanding of the tasks that lie ahead. We are grateful

for President Johnsen's support of faculty contributions and collaborations and look forward to a year of opportunities to address challenges together.

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

## **Staff Alliance**

Nate Bauer, Chair

On Thursday, July 21, the UA Staff Alliance held our annual day-long retreat, located at the University House in Fairbanks.

New Staff Alliance members for the 2016-17 year include Eric Johnson (President, SAA) and Chrystal Warmouth (Vice President, SAA).

President Jim Johnsen, Vice President Dan White, Chief HR Officer Keli Hite McGee, and Director of Benefits Erika Van Flein visited our retreat to discuss the accreditation review process, Strategic Pathways, UA and Alaska state budgeting, employee evaluations, HR strategic plans, and changes to employee life and health insurance benefits.

Outgoing Alliance Chair Faye Gallant reported on recent changes to methods for public testimony to the Board of Regents, as well as staff participation in the ongoing first round of system-wide Strategic Pathways program reviews. Faye was also presented with a plaque of appreciation for her service.

Staff Alliance goals for 2016-17 include **increased public testimony** to the Board of Regents by staff; **increased participation** in Alliance meetings by staff persons outside our formal members; and bolstered **communication with system-wide staff constituents** about Alliance functions and issues.

I am happy to introduce myself (Nate Bauer) as the newly elected Chair of Staff Alliance, along with Vice Chair Kolene James (UAS). I have lived and worked in Fairbanks for six years. As a science writer and editor at the International Arctic Research Center, I communicate to a wide range of stakeholders about the dynamics and values of scientific research in the North. I hold degrees in English (BA Creighton University, 2003; MA Boston College, 2005) and Capital Markets (MBA UAF, 2015).

I am eager to work with President Johnsen and the Board to grow and strengthen the communication that occurs across our university system, including between campuses, staff, faculty, students, and administration. I believe the challenges the University of Alaska currently faces can be opportunities for good and meaningful change, but only through serious openness and reflection.

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