

Governance Report

March 2017



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Colby Freely, Chair

A warm welcome is due to the newest member of the Board of Regents. I thank you for your willingness to serve the students of the University of Alaska (UA).

Once again, UA students are back at school for another semester of learning and personal growth towards becoming productive members of Alaska's community. The Coalition is also back to work, organizing its annual legislative conference. Every year during the legislative session, Coalition representatives from each campus, along with other student governance leaders, meet in Juneau to discuss issues that affect students on a large scale such as the University's operating and capital budgets, Title IX and campus safety, and the accessibility of education. During this year's conference, we will be discussing those same issues and deciding on our advocacy priorities as a statewide group.

The Coalition and other student governance leaders have participated in phases one and two of Strategic Pathways and are now engaged in phase 3 review teams. As I have mentioned in previous reports, students, while not subject matter experts, are experts in student experience. The value in our participation is bringing the student perspective to the conversation as well as to serve as a reminder of the key stakeholders the University of Alaska serves.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for the time and effort you dedicate, not only to the University, but to each of my fellow students. The Coalition has also taken note of the difficult decisions made by the President and Regents as you guide the University through challenging times. It is our role as student leaders to support the difficult work that you do by sharing perspective and by informing you of the unintended consequences of proposed actions. Similarly to student participation in Strategic Pathways, our service to you does not come from a place of technical or specialized expertise, but through the unique perspective that we provide which can richly inform your decision making. It is the hope of students that we will continue to be heard so that we can support the important and difficult work that you do.

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

The Faculty Alliance thanks the Board of Regents and President Johnsen for inviting us to a dinner in honor of Regents Fisher and Hughes who had just completed their terms of service.

Increased interaction among regents, faculty, and leadership is beneficial in any context, but especially in the difficult times we are facing together. We look forward to welcoming newly appointed regents when they are announced, but without question, Regents Fisher and Hughes have left significant legacies that will remain with the board.

Faculty remain concerned about the decisions being made by President Johnsen, the Summit Team, and the regents through the Strategic Pathways process. All three Faculty Senates and the Faculty Alliance have voiced their specific concerns on the integrity of the process, the quality of the outcomes, the implications of the actions taken as a result, and many, many suggestions for improving all of these. At the time of this report, only one motion ([10/2016](#)) passed by the UAF Faculty Senate has received an official response from President Johnsen. The other motion sent by the UAF Faculty Senate ([4/2016](#)) did not. In addition, none of the memos or motions sent from the UAA Faculty Senate ([2/2016](#), [11/2016](#), [11/2016](#)) on Strategic Pathways nor the one on the damage to faculty confidence as a consequence ([1/2017](#)) have had a written response, and neither have the four letters from the UAS Faculty Senate ([3/2016](#), [9/2016](#), [11/2016](#)—to be posted [here](#) soon—and [12/2016](#)) have received any official responses. Further, the Faculty Alliance sent a memo ([9/2016](#)) and two motions ([2017-02](#) and [2017-03](#)) without a reply. Unofficially, we understand that taking or not taking the recommendations offered is in effect a response thereto, but the lack of official response is not only disrespectful, but further undermines productive relationships that could be established or enhanced through such demonstrations of consideration and open dialogue.

Faculty involvement and a commitment to shared governance are crucial for maintaining healthy and vibrant institutions. We have requested that President Johnsen send all options being considered to governance groups for specific feedback and collective comment.

Our GER Coordinating Task Force continues to fulfill its charge from the Faculty Alliance. Disciplinary teams are meeting regularly. English faculty at all three universities have initiated curriculum changes to align all required composition courses from the 0-level through the 200-level. Our Writing Placement Community of Practice submitted their report and recommendations in December and the Faculty Alliance formally supported them at our January meeting ([2017-04](#)).

Additionally, the Faculty Alliance passed a resolution of support ([2017-05](#)) for the Alaska Native Studies GER proposal. We have encouraged the Alaska Native Studies Council to continue to coordinate with our GER Coordinating Task Force as they move forward with the necessary review processes at each university.

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

UA Staff Alliance during Thursday and Friday (1/26-27) as part of an inaugural mid-year retreat to discuss shared values and goals, Strategic Pathways Phase 2 options reports, alternative compensation proposals, and responses to system-wide employee engagement and morale reporting efforts.

Staff Alliance welcomes new members Samara Taber (Admissions and Staff Council VP, UAF) and Ryan Hill (Residence Life and Staff Council co-VP, UAA).

During our retreat, our group met with Chief Human Resources Officer Keli Hite McGee regarding recent system-wide HR initiatives, including leadership development programs and ongoing performance evaluation tools. We agree with the CHRO's emphasis on trust, results, productivity, and retaining our best personnel. To these ends, it remains a priority for staff governance to ensure a broader, more frequent, more consistent practice of completing performance evaluations by supervisors together with their staff members.

We also met with Vice President Michelle Rizk, with whom we discussed a range of issues affecting staff, including system-wide deficiencies in communications with leadership. Staff Alliance members are eager to work to strengthen communication across our own MAUs, though we also recognize the need to develop new tools for better engagement between University leadership and our constituents. VP Rizk left us with two central questions, both of which we find resonant: What kind of university do we want to be? What is it about the University of Alaska that makes us confident going forward?

Our discussions further included Faculty Alliance Chair Tara Smith and Coalition of Student Leaders Chair Colby Freel, in an attempt to identify common governance objectives and concerns. Smith and Freel each shared responses to Strategic Pathways developments. Smith in particular shared context for the UAA Faculty Senate's January vote of no confidence in President Johnsen.

Based on these conversations and others, it seems clear to the Alliance Chair and others that the University of Alaska's governance groups have at least two urgent and distinct shared goals: better communication and better data. Each requires sharing, commitment, and continued participation on the part of UA leadership.

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

System Governance Council

Kate Ripley, Chair

The System Governance Council has elected new officers for the 2016-2017 academic year, with Kate Ripley, UAF Alumni Director, serving as Chair. The System Governance Council serves as the overarching governance group to ensure good communication between staff, faculty and the student governance groups. Their primary focus so far this year has been to help spread the word about feedback opportunities and input on Strategic Pathways options.

System Governance Council serves as the coordinating body for governance leaders throughout the University of Alaska system.