

Governance Report

June 2017



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Colby Freel, Chair

As we celebrate the end of another academic year and another series of commencement ceremonies, the Coalition of Student Leaders would like to thank the Board for their guidance and oversight during a particularly challenging fiscal and political climate. This year has seen many reviews of current practice and even more options for new paths forward. As the majority of students pack up and set off to explore summertime pursuits, we know there will be significant work waiting for us on our return. And we are ready to meet this challenge with renewed energy.

The Coalition met for the last time of AY17 in late April. At our final meeting, we passed two resolutions. The first was in support of recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day across the University of Alaska. As Alaska's largest institution of higher and continuing education, the Coalition believes the University has a duty to create awareness of the rich history, culture, and languages of the Alaska Native people. By institutionalizing this celebration, the University can help foster increased communication and collaboration with Alaska Natives and create a more unified, inclusive Alaska.

The second resolution passed at our April meeting was in support of the Alaska Higher Education Investment Fund, Alaska Performance Scholarship, and the Alaska Education Grant. The Coalition urges the Board to continue to advocate for this program while publicly opposing the program-ending Senate Bill 103. At a time when Alaska will require more and more educated workers to meet state workforce needs, this bill goes in the opposite direction and creates barriers to Alaskan industry and economic development.

Students look forward to continued progress on Strategic Pathways and hope to provide feedback on Phase 3 options when they return from summer break. Students have greatly appreciated being a part of each phase of the strategic review initiative and plan to continue collaborating with the Board, administration, faculty and staff on the changes needed to create a stronger UA.

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 completed their participation on the Strategic Pathways Phase 3 teams to which they were assigned and anticipate assignment to implementation teams. The Alliance acknowledges several changes to the process since Phase 2, including a larger percentage of faculty on teams exploring changes to areas that are highly relevant to academics, open discussion of team efforts with affected faculty at each of the three universities and a timeline that provides for

consensus building. The relaxed timeline has also been applied to implementation of Phase 2 options and this has allowed for increased levels of conversation among President Johnsen, faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders. In light of the favorable reception given the new approach to Phase II and Phase III, the Alliance finds it disheartening that review of the more controversial decisions made during Phase I is not being pursued. Faculty across the system have expressed concern regarding the negative impacts on students and recruitment resulting from the academic restructuring brought about under Phase I. Revisiting aspects of these decisions, especially those that are still amenable to change, in the fashion adopted for the later phases of Strategic Pathways may yield cost-savings and avert enrollment losses.

Disciplinary committees within the GER Coordinating Task Force have been meeting and are drafting proposals for coordinated GERs. General education composition and pre-composition courses have been aligned under the prefix WRTNG. Faculty in those fields have also worked to improve student placement into required composition courses. They plan to implement changes in AY19, and improvements to math placement were implemented this spring. Composition, developmental English, and math courses were already completed, and communications courses will soon be as well. Fine Arts, Humanities, Social and Natural Science groups are making progress and will determine an implementation date based on the level of curricular work necessary to complete their charge. Looking to the future, the GER Coordinating Task Force has noted the need for continued collaboration across the universities in order to maintain coordination and will develop recommendations for consideration on such practices and structures in AY18.

Actions taken by the Faculty Alliance since the March 2-3, 2017 meeting of the Board of Regents include three resolutions. Resolution 2017-08 states Alliance support for the formal establishment of Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations, Resolution 2017-07 states details associated with costs and benefits of administering services via statewide system offices versus localization of some services at all universities and some services shared by universities. All three Faculty Senates passed a statement of support for the legislative establishment of a faculty regent.

The Faculty Alliance has written directly to Alaska state legislators expressing support for Governor Walker's \$325 million appropriation to the University and members of each Faculty Senate have testified to the House Finance Subcommittee on the importance of funding the University at the Governor's level.

On April 18, VP Dan White requested faculty feedback on Strategic Pathways Phase III with a 30 day turn-around. Given the teaching commitments associated with the end of a semester and the fact that most faculty will be off-contract as of May 12, the Alliance has requested an extension until September 2017.

At the request of administration, Faculty Alliance has reviewed draft versions of the UA policies regarding Protection of Minors, Title IX Policies and Procedures, and Services for Students Experiencing Disabilities. These reviews have resulted in clarification of intent and improvements to implementation.

In February, Faculty Alliance sent two recommendations to SAC on the Common Calendar (see February Report). Those will be forwarded to the Summit Team with the support of SAC. The Summit Team has discussed these recommendations and President Johnsen is finalizing his response. To address remaining and future common calendar issues, the Faculty Alliance formed a faculty Common Calendar Committee. They are Sarah Kirk and David Fitzgerald from UAA, Leah Berman and

Sandra Wildfeuer from UAF, and Julie Hamilton and Maren Haavig from UAS. They have held their first meeting and plan to meet again before the end of contract.

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 has met twice since the last Board of Regents meeting, on Wednesday, April 5 and Wednesday, May 3, to discuss directions for Phase 2 of Strategic Pathways, changes to UA Furlough policy and leave accrual, faculty and staff representation on the Board of Regents, and alternative compensation option recommendations.

In April, Staff Alliance unanimously supported a resolution seeking formal staff and faculty representatives on the Board of Regents. Among staff it is clear that, based on recent Board discussions and decisions, there would be clear benefit to all of our governing bodies (including the Board of Regents) for there to be more direct, sustained, reciprocal interaction between staff, faculty, and university administration. It is hard for me to imagine how this exchange could occur meaningfully without the establishment of Staff and Faculty Regent positions.

Our April meeting also resulted in unanimous support for a resolution requesting a change to establish parity across exempt and non-exempt staff positions, regarding how annual leave is accrued during furlough periods, which the President ultimately approved. We also established a committee to examine and propose system and campus-level procedures for awarding Staff Emeritus status, and we provided collected feedback from across the system as part of a formal governance response to Strategic Pathways Phase 2 options reports.

During the May meeting we were joined by President Johnsen, who provided university budget updates and expectations, developments in the Strategic Pathways processes for Phases 2 and 3, and details about the current and upcoming chancellor searches at UAF and UAA.

Based on recommendations from our Staff Alliance Compensation Committee and ongoing discussions amongst our group since January, we submitted to the President in May a list of compensation alternatives to salary increases, including a merit-based employee recognition program, supplementary personal holiday(s), and targeted loyalty/retention incentives.

Also in May, prompted by work among governance groups at UAS, Staff Alliance passed a resolution supporting system-wide recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day in October. We are heartened to witness the deep and widespread support this effort has received from all over the university system and the state.

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