

Governance Report

March 2018



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Colby Freel, Chair

After a successful fall semester, student leaders have returned to campus and are ready to take on the new year and new legislative session.

As the spring semester develops, we turn our focus to Juneau and the important decisions to be made there. The Coalition of Student Leaders will be holding its annual legislative conference the weekend of March 17 and 18, and will be meeting with legislators the following Monday and Tuesday. This conference gives students from all UA campuses the chance to share how the University has provided opportunity and inspiration to their lives and access to careers. These powerful stories are an important part of our advocacy efforts.

Beyond our own personal stories, student leaders are very aware of legislative issues affecting higher education in Alaska. While the Coalition's talking points are still be determined, in the past the Coalition has talked to legislators about the importance of the Alaska Performance Scholarship, the Alaska Education Grant, and shared our concerns about the depletion of the Alaska Higher Education Investment Fund which supports those two scholarship programs. Also of potential interest to the Coalition will be House Bill 221. This bill would clarify the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education's ability to maintain an education and workforce outcomes database, partner with other State agencies to link existing data, and allow the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to share unemployment insurance data for the purpose of using it in a statewide education and workforce statistics program. This year, more than ever before, efforts will be needed to support these important investments in Alaska's higher education system.

Outside of our advocacy efforts, the Coalition is pursuing several issues that affect students on a daily basis. For many students, employment an important piece of their financial plan. However, student wages have not been increased at UA since 2011, even after the state's minimum wage was increased in 2014. We are hoping to work with the system administration to find a mutually agreeable solution that works for students. Additionally, the Coalition will also be considering responses to the staff and faculty regent initiatives, and Faculty Alliance's request regarding student tuition and fees across campuses.

The Coalition is thankful for the dedication and effort devoted to giving us every chance to succeed, especially the work being done to advocate for the university. Although we face tremendous challenges, working together as allies, and not against each other as adversaries, is what will create the best chance of achieving success for UA students.

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

Lisa Hoferkamp, Chair

The Faculty Alliance (FA) remains committed to maximizing the role of shared governance in university decisions that affect academic programs. Broad-ranging expertise, a comprehensive view of academia and the important role it serves in society, as well as a deep commitment to the University of Alaska (UA), are features that faculty bring with them to the table and consequently help move the discussion in a positive direction. The FA continues to embrace all meaningful opportunities to discuss productive efforts towards addressing academic as well as other issues with the Board of Regents (BOR).

Since the November 2017 BOR meeting, the FA is currently considering, actively working on, and/or concluded work on the following issues:

As FA chair, I met with President Johnsen on November 30, 2017, and he described to me implications of the federal tax bill, plans for the 2018 Leadership Workshop in Anchorage, efforts to implement a 25 percent discount on Occupational Endorsement Certificates (OEC), licenses and other certificates as well as administrative sentiments regarding common fee payment schedules and a review by General Counsel of faculty efforts to establish a faculty regent.

At this meeting, President Johnsen and I discussed faculty appointments to statewide councils. The FA nominees for all statewide councils was agreed upon with the exception of faculty representation for UAA on the Research Council. It was agreed that Chancellor Gingerich would further discuss that appointment with the UAA Faculty Senate President. In a letter dated December 20, 2017, President Johnsen directed council chairs to appoint, with the exception of the Research Council, all FA nominees. In that letter President Johnsen cited his satisfaction with the processes whereby faculty representation on the Research Council was determined and left the controversial UAA appointment to the Research Council unchanged. The FA does not support the appointment of part-time faculty to positions categorized as “faculty representation”. The FA supports the definition of faculty as those faculty members represented by one of the faculty unions thus excluding faculty who are supervisory such as department chairs.

When asked for comment on the lack of cost of living increases to faculty salaries, President Johnsen indicated that a UA-wide review of salaries and analysis of how those amounts compare within and outside of Alaska will be completed by June 2018.

Changes to the UA policy on concurrent enrollment were reviewed by the FA. Associate VP Fred Villa, chair of the Academic Council (AC) subcommittee charged with those policy

revisions, has accepted most of the FA recommendations. The final document was generally agreeable to all affected parties, consistent with the Protection of Minors on Campus Policy and presented to the Summit Team.

Faculty concern regarding discounts to OEC courses that are at or near capacity was acknowledged and plans to identify relevant courses and seek solutions that include the hiring of new faculty were noted. The FA looks forward to reviewing future data linking increased enrollment to this financial incentive.

The Human Resources (HR) Council described efforts towards implementation of the salary survey described by President Johnsen (see above) and the FA appreciates those efforts. The HR Council also briefly discussed collective bargaining agreement (CBA) language that allows faculty to cash in 40 hours of unused faculty time off. It has recently come to the attention of the FA that the ability of faculty to pursue this benefit is contingent on legislative action on the UA budget. Given that faculty contracts end on May 12, 2018, this leaves many with the question of fund availability for the 2018-19 academic year if legislative budget approval does not occur prior to that date. The FA has shared this concern with Interim VPASA Paul Layer and looks forward to information on UA efforts to avoid denying faculty this compensation which offers relief from uncompensated cost of living increases.

The FA would like to thank the University Relations Council for encouraging Executive Council members and administrative personnel across UA to continue educating themselves on issues of academic freedom and free speech at public universities.

The FA has submitted a memo to President Johnsen (Oct. 31, 2017) with suggestions for equitable fee and tuition applications and distributions in cases of shared courses. That memo has formed the basis of conversations within AC meetings. Efforts towards equitable fee distribution are proceeding and the FA thanks President Johnsen and VPASA Layer for working with faculty towards a solution.

Discussions of shared courses aimed at ease of access and course quality are ongoing. The UA faculty appreciate administration's continued recognition and acknowledgment that the majority of issues are instructional in nature with pedagogical and accreditation implications and thus the purview of faculty. The FA encourages administrative support of departmental efforts at course sharing.

In a similar vein, the FA supports Provost Henrichs' suggestion that considerations around outsourcing of e-Learning components be discussed through the Academic Council with faculty concerns forming the basis of the discussion.

The UA College of Education remains a sensitive issue among faculty. Because faculty are committed to the university, they remain committed to the success of this endeavor, however, questions persist regarding the real advantages of the current approach.

The FA has worked with Interim VPASA Layer to develop a formal request for proposals to be funded under the United Academics Faculty Initiative Fund. We anticipate a February release with funded projects to start in late April.

The FA has been working with the IT Council across several fronts, including efforts to ensure the upcoming transition to Banner 9 occurs with the least disruption to academic course operations. Other items for which the FA has provided useful information include faculty needs relative to video conferencing services, the UA Web Accessibility Notice, the UA Information Resources Policy and most importantly the reliability and accessibility of the UA course delivery system BlackBoard (BB). In a memo to the IT Council several FA recommendations regarding upgrades to the BB system were outlined. The memo was well-received and the FA appreciates all efforts by IT personnel to minimize disruptions to this important teaching tool.

On January 13 and 14, 2018, the FA gathered in Anchorage to discuss University-wide issues and identify strategies for meeting many of their long-term objectives. One of the issues that was discussed in depth at this FA retreat was the administrative response to the FA's efforts to establish a faculty regent. The official UA response cited conflicts of interest as a major impediment to the ability of a faculty regent to participate in BOR discussions in an unbiased fashion. The FA believes these objections are unfounded, and note the productive role the student regent has taken in broadening the BOR's discussions without personal aggrandizement, as well as the restraint displayed by existing regents whose strong ties to state institutions might allow them to profit from their influence over various board decisions. Furthermore, the FA points out that numerous universities across the nation have successfully included voting faculty regents on their boards and scholars have published on the ensuing productive outcomes. The FA supports the establishment of a voting faculty regent and sees that action as an affirmation of the UA BOR's commitment to shared governance.

The FA also used the retreat as an opportunity to define a path forward on a UA Title IX policy that better reflects UA's commitment to academic freedom, shared governance and student rights. The FA hopes to work with the System Governance Council and statewide administration on revisions to the existing UA Title IX Policy. Possible strategies include generation of an in-house training module to replace the existing Haven model.

A General Education Requirement (GER) Alignment Retreat was finalized and scheduled for February 10 and 11. This effort brings together disciplinary leads from each university, GER Coordinating Task Force (CTF) members and FA representatives under the direction of GER CTF chair Dan Kline with the goal of aligning the remaining shared GER courses in the disciplinary areas and discussing the next phase of the University's GER work. The group will focus on improved lines of communication and coordination of ongoing work with the ultimate goal of a finished product by June of 2018. The FA reminds the BOR that some curriculum committee processes will remain for completion in fall 2018. The FA would like to acknowledge the contribution of Morgan Dufseth in making that retreat happen and in

assisting the GER CTF chair with the numerous administrative tasks associated with the GER alignment task.

Letters, memos, resolutions

[Memo regarding tuition and fee distribution](#)

[Memo to President Johnsen regarding a bill establishing a faculty regent](#)

[Memo to President Johnsen requesting faculty appointments to SW councils](#)

[Memo \(follow-up\) regarding faculty appointments to SW councils](#)

[Memo to IT Council regarding BB upgrade](#)

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

Staff Alliance

Kara Axx, Chair

UA Staff Alliance (SA) met on November 1, December 6 and January 10 to discuss full-time/part-time employment definitions, non-monetary compensation ideas for staff, introduction to Career Coach, Staff Make Students Count award, faculty and staff regents, staff representation on search committees and discussion topics for spring retreat.

Tara Ferguson, UA Compensation Director, attended a meeting to discuss the definitions of full time employees and her recommendations on how to resolve issues that staff are experiencing. After several discussions of full-time vs part-time employee definitions, SA has decided to address this concern via informal solution instead of requesting a formal regulation change.

John Moore, Chair of the Staff Alliance Compensation committee, attended the November meeting to discuss options the committee was discussing for non-monetary compensation alternatives for staff members. He plans to submit the committee's final recommendations to the Alliance by the end of February.

Fred Villa, Associate VP Workforce Programs, attended the December meeting to present a new tool available publicly called Career Coach. The main goals of the application are to assist in career advancement with a connection to programs offered by UA to lead to possible increases of enrollment.

Michelle Pope, Director HR Accounting and HRIS, has made attending all meetings a priority to keep SA up to date on any changes to HR policy, regulation or procedures. SA would like to officially thank Michelle for her dedication; her participation has been incredibly valuable and appreciated. Major updates include: changes to annual leave cash-in, directory changes, possible changes to healthcare providers, changes to the wellness program rebates, updates and efficiencies to the open enrollment process, HSA conversion to calendar year, updates and efficiencies to the onboarding and recruitment process, and the compensation equity study.

The Staff Make Students Count nomination period is open from February 5 to March 19. This award highlights the impact staff have on students across the university. Awarded by the president to a staff member at each university and Statewide, this is the most prestigious staff award at UA. Committee members will represent each of the campuses and review the nomination packets and make recommendations for candidate selection.

Interested staff members will be reaching out to legislators on their own time, to discuss adding a staff representative to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. Staff Alliance is on the record as supporting the addition of both a staff and faculty regent.

Staff representation on search committees was discussed at the January meeting. Staff Alliance will bring this issue to the System Governance Council to discuss faculty and student representation as well. As a whole, the university has improved with including governance representation in the hiring process, but outlining a formal procedure may clarify the process more.

Staff Alliance will be holding a spring retreat in Anchorage March 22- 23; however, the agenda has not been finalized.

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

System Governance Council

Kara Axx, Chair

The System Governance Council (SGC) met on November 20 and discussed AY18 goals, opportunities and challenges.

SGC would like to ensure that all governance groups continue to be included in the ongoing Title IX process, especially where related to academic freedom, employee reporting and students' rights. SGC is planning to invite Mary Gower to the February meeting to discuss further.

Individual faculty has moved forward with approaching legislators to sponsor bill to add a Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents. Staff will also move forward, individually, to find legislative support.

SGC discussed the call-in public testimony to UA Board of Regents meetings. While SGC understands this is a board decision, SGC would like to present some suggestions that might be considered beneficial to the public process. SGC has heard concerns that the call in only public testimony can lead to a separation from actual agenda items, leading to public comment that could be considered less relevant. It can also appear that the call in only testimony isn't as well received as the face to face testimony. SGC will hope to have recommendations to the Board by its June meeting.

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.