

Governance Report

May/June 2018



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Colby Freel, Chair

As we celebrate the end of the academic year and another series of commencement ceremonies, the Coalition of Student Leaders would like to thank Chair O'Neill and the Board for their steady leadership and patient guidance during an unpredictable legislative season.

As the spring semester winds to a close, I am happy to report the Coalition held a successful legislative conference in Juneau March 17-20. Conference participants spent two days learning about issues important to the university, including operating and capital budget scenarios, programs administered by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, and the Higher Education Tax Credit. The students also worked on developing personal stories to help illustrate to legislators how UA has provided opportunity, inspiration and access to better careers and futures. Over 30 students met with close to 60 legislators following the conference; students noted there was increased interest in how the university can be a driver of the state's economy.

Looking to next year, the Coalition is planning to hold its annual summit in Fairbanks in late September, where they will begin to address several issues that affect students on our campuses. For many students, textbooks are a major cost of attending the University of Alaska (UA). For that reason, the Coalition plans to look into how the university could better utilize open resources for UA courses. They also plan to develop ways to better represent distance students, who are becoming a larger segment of the UA student population. The Coalition recognizes that, while students will each have a unique experience at UA, they should have equal access to representation and an opportunity to voice their concerns.

I would like to thank the members of the board for your service to the University and its students. You have faced new challenges and have courageously acted upon new opportunities, all the while exercising studious leadership over our strategic and long-term needs. As this will be my last meeting representing the Coalition to the Board, I would like to thank each of you for your years of service and for allowing me the opportunity to learn from and to contribute to your work.

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) thanks the Board of Regents (BOR) for their efforts at maximizing the role of shared governance in University decisions that affect academic programs. We welcome all opportunities for effective communication with the UA administration and the BOR as we pursue productive efforts towards ensuring the quality of UA academic programs and address the myriad issues associated with their effective delivery.

The General Education Requirement (GER) Alignment Task Force is proceeding as per the timeline provided to the BOR by the FA at the March 1, 2018, BOR meeting. General education courses that are shared across the three universities have been aligned as per the Board's directive (i.e. course numbers, titles and descriptions). Curriculum Committee processes for the required changes have been either completed or are in progress. Information for the latter courses will appear in fall 2019 course catalogues. Faculty associated with the GER Alignment Task Force will direct completion efforts during AY 18/19 and reassemble in fall 2019 to develop long-term practices that will maintain shared GER alignment.

Working with VPASA Paul Layer, the FA has developed the first Faculty Initiative Fund (FIF) Request for Proposals (RFP). The FIF-RFP was released on March 21, 2018, and proposals were accepted through April 27, 2018. Evaluation of proposals will be conducted by the Academic Council from April 30 until May 11 and awards made no later than June 8. A large number of inquiries have been logged and quality proposals are anticipated.

The FA has provided input to several administrative efforts.

- In response to CHRO Keli Hite McGee's request for feedback on a draft CITO job description, a summary of FA recommendations was provided that included several recommendations for experience in higher education and academic applications. The FA later expressed interest in faculty representation on the CITO search committee and made recommendations based on the 2017 James Szmak report.
- At the request of VPASA Paul Layer, the FA has begun soliciting faculty volunteers to contribute to efforts at developing an online portal at UA. Anticipating a delay in identifying those faculty volunteers, the FA provided to VPASA Layer recommendations for improving the UA online presence and decreasing frustrations associated with online course registration by integrating existing online tools. The FA hopes that including these recommendations as well as input from volunteer faculty in UA portal discussions will yield the desired result: an online tool that serves all stakeholders in the most straightforward and efficient manner.
- In light of recent discussions regarding outsourcing of E-Learning programs and discernible faculty objection to such a practice, the FA, in an effort to make clear their position on the subject, published the following statement:
The Faculty Alliance is strongly opposed to outsourcing of any academic program to any entity not under the control of the faculty of the University of Alaska, regardless of the manner in which that program is delivered to students.

- After a lengthy discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of administrative decisions surrounding the Alaska College of Education, the FA chose to publish a motion in support of Dr. Megan Buzby's Feb. 28 letter summarizing faculty concerns on that topic.
- The FA submitted the following proposed revision to University Regulation for President Johnsen's consideration through the Academic Council:

R10.04.040 General Education Requirements

C. Assumptions Regarding General Education Requirements for Baccalaureate Degrees

3. [REMOVED: Credit may be counted towards general education or a degree major requirement, but not both.] ADDED: A student shall not use a single course to meet more than one general education category. However, general education courses may also satisfy degree or major requirements.

The FA believes this revision removes an unnecessary restriction that complicates degree requirement descriptions in the catalog, resulting in a more streamlined and less confusing experience for UA students.

- In an effort to avoid misinterpretation and foster transparent communication, the FA requested access to BOR meeting recordings. President Johnsen declined the request, citing the BOR's role as a governing rather than legislative body, their absence of a defined constituency limiting the need for verbatim records and the existence of official minutes as well as opportunities to request recordings of relevant excerpts.
 - Faculty Alliance finds this response surprising and disappointing, given:
 - a) The BOR is a board of the state of Alaska by Alaska statute and the Alaska constitution and hence is a public board.
 - b) Other volunteer state boards like the Alaska Board of Fisheries post tapes of all meetings promptly on their website.
 - c) The BOR of the University of California System posts tapes of all meetings on their website.
 - d) It is not clear what purpose it serves to limit access to the full public meetings on the basis of an unknown constituency since the constituency of the UA BOR are the residents of Alaska.
 - e) The official minutes are short and do not provide a substantive record of the discussions and reasons leading to far-reaching decisions and even the decisions themselves that occur during public UA BOR meetings.
 - f) The cost to provide online access to meeting recordings is trivial as has been demonstrated to be trivial by the UAF and UAA Faculty Senates, the UAF Staff Council, and the United Students of UAA.
 - g) Making BOR meeting recordings available online will only serve to increase public, faculty, staff, and student engagement with UA, which is presumably of high value to UA.

Faculty involvement and a commitment to shared governance are crucial for maintaining healthy and vibrant institutions. The FA requests that President Johnsen make continued

efforts to increase involvement of governance groups in all decisions, especially those that directly or indirectly affect academic programs, through requests for specific feedback and collective comment.

Letters, Motions, Resolutions

[Motion in support of Megan Buzby's letter regarding the AK CoE; March 9, 2018](#)

[Letter to VPASA Paul Layer regarding dual use of GERS; March 19, 2018](#)

[Letter to VPASA Paul Layer regarding faculty opposition to program outsourcing; March 21, 2018](#)

[Letter to HRO Keli Hite-McGee regarding the CITO job description; March 26, 2018](#)

[Letter to VPASA Paul Layer regarding UA Portal; April 24, 2018](#)

[Memo to President Johnsen nominating David Fitzgerald, UAA, to the CITO Search Committee; April 24, 2018](#)

[Memo to VPASA Paul Layer nominating Orion Lawlor, UAF, to the UA Portal Working Group, April 24, 2018](#)

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 met on February 7, March 7 and April 4 to discuss staff regent representation, nominations for Staff Make Students Count Award, staff emeritus recommendations, staff representation on search committees, layoff notice requirements and grant-funded employees participating in governance.

Michelle Pope, Director of HR Accounting and HRIS, attended meetings and provided updates on changes to the family medical leave process, updates on the market analysis and pay equity/salary comparison study, updated information on the new training procedures for UA, and updates about the open enrollment process that will be completely online through UAOnline this year. We appreciate HR making such strides towards efficiency by moving to secure electronic and simplified forms.

Myron Dosch, Chief Finance Officer, attended the February meeting to discuss changes from 2015 that eliminated participation by staff members in the optional retirement plan (ORP) as a method of cost avoidance while working to meet the state mandated floor in PERS/TRS. Currently only faculty and executives are allowed to participate in ORP. Staff Alliance is evaluating to determine if future action is necessary.

Staff Alliance passed a resolution in support of modifying creating a Staff Emeritus designation. The recommended changes would help clarify the process for designating staff as emeritus, and are currently being reviewed by Human Resources and Academic Councils.

Staff Alliance passed a resolution in support of staff governance representation on UA Executive level search committees. Although staff are frequently included on search committees, the Alliance felt a governance representative would help address ongoing staff concerns and provide a broader staff perspective.

Staff Alliance is evaluating a resolution passed by UAA Staff Council and recommendations from the Staff Alliance Compensation Committee on creating longer layoff notice period for non-exempt employees; justification for this change includes providing more equity across the system between exempt and non-exempt staff.

Staff Alliance works to stay cognizant of issues directly affecting staff and have received notice that staff in grant-funded positions often have difficulties with participation in governance. As such, the Staff Alliance is researching options to help encourage representation from staff in research/grant funded units and hopes to work with local staff councils and administration to develop a solution that maintains the integrity of the grant while providing opportunities for staff input and feedback.

The Staff Alliance opted to forgo its spring retreat and is now planning for its fall retreat, which will focus on onboarding new members and developing FY19 goals and objectives.

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 met on February 15 and April 24 and discussed Title IX, Legislative updates, requesting that Board of Regents' meeting recordings be available online, a call for open resources at UA and recommendations on the public testimony session during BOR meetings.

Mary Gower, Chief Title IX Officer, presented a current update of progress of Title IX activities at UA during the February meeting, and noted upcoming training requirements will be announced. Campus Faculty Senates have created Title IX committees and are working with Title IX Directors.

Miles Baker, AVP for Government Relations, provided updates on happenings in Juneau at the February meeting, including the budget, education tax credit and upcoming events in Juneau. AVP Baker's presentation on how to be an advocate for UA was recommended and found very useful by SGC members.

System Governance Council passed a resolution in support of the UA Board of Regents providing recordings of the meetings on its website.

System Governance Council discussed public testimony options at Board of Regents' meetings. There are concerns that the call-in only method can create a separation from actual agenda items, leading to public comment that could be considered less than relevant. It can also appear that the call-in only testimony isn't as well received as the face-to-face testimony.

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.