

Governance Report

June 2019



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Nick Bursell, Chair

The Coalition of Student Leaders last met in late April. Our main topics of discussion were the next steps for advocacy after our legislative conference and tuition in AY21. The Coalition has not passed any new resolutions in that time.

The March legislative conference came with plenty of success. Student leaders heard from multiple legislators and university personnel about the ongoings in the Capitol, including Representative Shaw, Representative Merrick, Senator Kiehl, and Representative Josephson. Students held meetings in 59 legislative offices, including a meeting with Governor Dunleavy's staff and the UAA, UAF, and UAS student body presidents. Students rallied outside the capitol on the first day of meetings as well, drawing a crowd of over 50 in support of the university.

A highlight of the conference for many students was the amount of time given for coordination amongst students. Various efforts were made in student-led initiatives to support UA, including footage taken for an online viral video. Many relationships were forged and connections solidified, with students leaving the conference with new relationships spanning across Alaska.

The Coalition has taken note of President Johnsen's call for discussion on tuition for AY21. We are in the process of coming to a formal conclusion and hope next year's Coalition will submit a resolution on the subject early in the fall semester. It is critical that students remain involved in this decision prior to the November 2019 Board meeting. I want to advocate to President Johnsen and the Board directly in support of consistent and clear communication on all decisions and motions and made regarding future tuition. These communications should also be distributed statewide to all students in order for them to have time to get their fiscal house in order if there are changes to be made.

As always, thank you for hearing from the Coalition of Student Leaders.

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

Maria Williams, Chair

Please note: With the departure of Chris Fallen in March 2019, Maria Williams was elected to be the interim Chair of Faculty Alliance in March. As of June 2019, Maria Williams will serve as the Chair for the AY.

I am pleased to have had the privilege to have served on Faculty Alliance for the past two years, and also am the Past President of the UAA Faculty Senate. I have learned a great deal about the principles of shared governance and its value and importance. The balance of ideas from administrators, faculty, staff and students is indeed a wonderful premise in which to move our respective universities forward.

I deeply appreciate my Faculty Alliance colleagues, as well as colleagues across the three universities, which include faculty, staff, students and administrators. The UA system is highly complex, with three separately accredited universities, and numerous community campuses, and many wonderful degree programs and research initiatives. I am impressed with the important role that President Johnsen holds, as he is a person that has knowledge of basically all the moving parts of the UA—which is quite a feat. I also have deep respect for the UA Board of Regents, who are dedicated to higher education in Alaska and spend hundreds of hours on identifying ways to make the UA System more effective, and given our uncertain budget times, more sustainable. My hat is off to the president, vice presidents, the Summit team, all the chancellors, provosts, deans, Faculty Alliance, Staff Alliance, Coalition of Student Leaders and, of course, the Board of Regents.

This is my first official report to the UA Board of Regents and includes a lot of work that outgoing FA Chair, Chris Fallen provided. He must give given credit for the successes of this past AY, as well as the outgoing members of Faculty Alliance and the incoming new members. I speak as one person, but the work being done is by a dedicated group of faculty – and I must acknowledge them: Scott Downing, Sharon Chamard, Megan Buzby, Robin Gilcrest, Heather Batchelder, Sine Anahita, Donie Bret-Harte, Jak Meier, and Kelly Smith.

GER Advisory Committee - new

There were several items that Faculty Alliance spent a great deal of time on this past AY, these included establishing a GER Advisory Committee, which will have their first formal meeting in August 2019. The GER Advisory Committee will have representatives from the three universities and will work with Faculty Alliance on recommendations to insure that the GER courses that have been aligned will remain so. We do not want to lose ground in an effort that took many hands and many meetings, and several years.

Common Course Block Report and Recommendations

[Report with Appendices](#)

Faculty Alliance was tasked with finding an “80% solution” by President Johnsen in the area of common course blocks between UAF, UAA, and UAS in an effort to address inter-

university collaboration and course sharing¹. Faculty Alliance supports inter-university collaboration and course sharing. This is already being done, and we see the merit in synchronous and asynchronous course offerings. We also understand that there are circumstances in which face to face courses offered synchronously will fill voids, especially when there is either a required course that only one faculty can teach, and students in other universities need to take it. For example, the Alaska School of Education, the Nursing program, Engineering, etc. An important goal would be to expand more asynchronous and synchronous courses as allowed by funding, enhanced technological resources, and faculty resources. Note the biggest issue is the lack of broad band in many parts of Alaska.

There are several elements that fall under common course block or course block alignment that are addressed in the report:

1. credit hour(s)
2. class schedule (start times of courses)

Faculty Alliance gathered data, including surveys. It is clear that faculty are deeply attached to their respective campus schedules, but have also recognized the importance of having synchronous distance courses, as well as asynchronous courses in order to have shared courses across the greater UA system. These have increased in numbers across all the campuses of the UA system. We anticipate this trend to continue, but must note that many parts of Alaska lack proper bandwidth, and UA IT infrastructure must be fully supported as well. Student voice and opinion on this was also considered, and student governance was consulted within our final recommendations.

Credit Hour differentials

UAA has a 50-minute credit hour, UAF has a 60-minute credit hour, and UAS main campus has a 60-minute credit hour. The start time of classes at the three separately-accredited universities do not align, and there is variation within each of the three universities as well in terms of start time, especially in the evenings. Faculty Alliance does not view this as a stumbling block for students, but is reflective of variations of meeting the needs of students on each particular campus, and also variations in discipline, and credit hour of the course(s). Possible solutions for moving towards shared course block times could include *evening common start time(s)* for courses, but there will inevitably be some variations due to discipline, and the credit hour of the class (i.e., one, two, three or four credit class).

Class Schedule Considerations

Class schedules are designed with great care by each respective university and community campus. Often the community campuses have non-traditional and commuter students who work full time, and the best evening start times are 6:30 p.m. and/or 7 p.m. Depending on the discipline the schedule can also have variations.

All three universities respond to the needs of the students, including scheduling options that reflect different degrees, as well as location and delivery. UAS Faculty Senate recently approved a new course schedule to support student success on their main campus. UAA's

¹ We already have calendar and GER alignment.

schedule has the bulk of face-to-face classes Monday through Thursday, so Friday is a day for student governance and club council meetings. Friday is also heavily used for work done in the Faculty Senate, Faculty Senate committees, and departmental meetings. Alignment could seriously threaten the current structure and negatively impact the ability of the institution to meaningfully engage in shared governance if UAA has to move to a Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule.

Recommendations

Faculty Alliance supports the unique identities of each of the separately-accredited universities which are shaped by student demographics, geographic location, and faculty expertise. A one-size-fits-all alignment will erode these unique identities, and have a negative effect on student success. Therefore, we oppose common course block alignment. If there must be some segment of course schedule(s) aligned, we recommend the following considerations:

- UAF, UAA and UAS maintain their current credit hour;
- Evening start times could be aligned, but UAA maintains the 50-minute contact hour – with respect and care that the community campuses maintain their evening start times²;
- Summer session alignment - course start times could be aligned

We believe in identifying a solution that will *not* create havoc with students, faculty and degree programs. That is our number one goal. The recommendations include possible alignment of evening course blocks, while maintaining the respective credit hour differences that exist across the system. This solution would be the ‘path of least resistance.’ However, we think it is important to be sensitive to the needs of community campuses and the disciplinary needs of programs as these directly affect the students in the programs, and in many cases accreditation as well.

Other Items FA Accomplished in FY19

1. FA updated their by-laws and constitution
2. Assisted with FIF RFP and also with FIF Reviews
3. Faculty are working together to advocate for funding

Faculty Alliance Retreat and upcoming areas of Focus

A fall retreat will be held in Anchorage over the Labor Day weekend. The themes will include addressing the following:

1. Shared Governance challenges – how can we be better? With the budget pressures it is apparent that stressful behavior is emerging and this includes non-transparent decision making and non-adherence to shared governance principles in the areas of work load agreements and in some cases institutional bullying;
2. Address with the UA Board of Regents and President the need to add verbiage in the UA Policies dealing with two main areas:

² For example, Mat-Su Community College has evening class times starting at 7 p.m. to accommodate their commuter students.

- a. Equity
- b. Bullying

These two issues are quite disparate, but Faculty Alliance will be discussing these at our fall retreat. UAA completed a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan in 2017 that addressed ways that could provide more equity in areas of student success; hiring practices, identifying vulnerable student populations (LGBTQ2, Alaska Native, Veteran, etc.), and issues of space. Perhaps the UA system should either move forward on a similar study, or adapt new verbiage in the area of equity (student, faculty, staff, etc.)

On a more troubling note, faculty are experiencing stress in regards to administration overreach and in some cases lack of communication in regards to academic programs that faculty manage. In most cases this is simply due to lack of understanding of shared governance, and also 'interim fatigue'. Interim fatigue has been plaguing UAA for some years and no one is to blame, it's been brought on by various circumstances beyond anyone's control. For example, since my arrival at UAA in 2011, I have worked under three chancellors (one was an interim); and five provosts (three of whom were Interim). Also the largest college in the system, the College of Arts & Sciences has an interim dean. We need to solidify the leadership at UAA and avoid future scenarios in which interims are appointed rather than going through search processes.

Conclusion

I wish to end my report on positive news and will conclude by highlighting recent activity across the system in the area inter-university collaborations:

- Music Department Opera exchange at UAA and UAF – Professors Mari Hahn, Jaunelle Celaire and Lorna Eder
- Heather Batchelder from UAS and Hattie Harry from UAA are working with the Alaska Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health to create opportunities for students at UAA and UAS to expand their knowledge about early intervention
- Alaska Native Studies Council (UAF, UAS, UAA and community campuses) is hosting an Alaska Native language retreat at Kenai Peninsula College, and an indigenous leadership retreat in May 2019
- Scott Christiansen is working with UAF and UAA regarding secondary professional development schools
- The Teacher Education Council has representatives from UAA, UAF, UAS
- All of the universities are working together to advocate for funding
- All of the universities are working on adopting the Passport system for transfer credits
- All of the universities are aligning on dual enrollment/concurrent enrollment fees and paperwork

Some of the collaborations listed above were funded by the Faculty Initiative Fund via UNAC. It does illustrate the interest in the faculty across the three universities to work collaboratively on research and degree programs.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.

The UA Faculty Alliance is the system-wide governance group elected to represent the faculty in promoting welfare and education effectiveness at UA, to provide consultation to system executive leadership, and to facilitate system-wide communication among faculty at all three universities at UA.

Staff Alliance

Josh Watts, Chair

University of Alaska Staff Alliance met on March 21, April 19, and May 17th. Our next meeting is scheduled for June 21.

Staff across the system have been discussing news about the budget as it becomes available, a number of HR-related topics, including the compensation/equity study, the performance evaluation process, and the HR redesign. We've also been reviewing the draft regulation on voluntary and mandatory leaves of absence, and discussing the recently announced task force for UA restructure.

As has become habit, I'd like to start off by thanking members of the executive team for their diligence in keeping UA staff updated and included in the decision-making processes happening across the system. At UAF, UAA, and UAS we've seen Chancellor White, Chancellor Sandeen, and Chancellor Caulfield and their teams regularly at events speaking openly and candidly about their thoughts and plans, and at Statewide we've been working to create more opportunities for leadership to meet with us. With all of the uncertainty, and the changes that have been happening so rapidly (and with no sign of slowing down), I can't stress enough how important this sort of outreach is. Staff at UA are hungry for whatever information is available, even if that information is, "we don't have any information." Thank you for your commitment to keeping Staff informed. We appreciate it, and hope to see it continue.

Staff Alliance had CHRO Keli Hite McGee at its last meeting, where she discussed the recent HR redesign, performance evaluations, and updates on the compensation study. News of the HR redesign hit staff fairly hard, and has generated a lot of questions and concerns about what that means, if it sets a precedent for other departments, and so on. UAF Staff Council and UA Staff Alliance representatives were able to meet with CHRO McGee, where she discussed the reasoning behind the redesign and the thought that went into it. We left the conversation far more comfortable with the process, and even excited by the approach. It is another exceptional example of communication doing excellent work in our organization, and we look forward to the continued efforts that CHRO McGee has planned to spread that information around. As mentioned during our meeting with the CHRO, Staff

Alliance would very much appreciate being kept abreast of the situation when it comes to consolidation of HR policy across the system, as there are plenty of discrepancies between campuses. Also of note is the fact that Staff across the system should be receiving a personalized letter by the end of the month with information about the results of the compensation study as it pertains to them. It's fantastic to see the fruits of this long project, and I think that CHRO McGee and her team should be commended for ensuring this project was kept a priority during all of this tumult.

The review period for the proposed regulation on voluntary and mandatory leaves of absence is May 27. There has been some small amount of feedback given on the digital copy of this draft. Staff Alliance discussed it briefly at our last meeting, and didn't note anything of particular concern in the document, although it is worth noting that most comments left have been by teams much closer to the student experience. We hope that this feedback is discussed and taken into account when the final version is being written.

There was some frustration expressed by staff after the May meeting of the Board. Many staff tuned in to watch the stream, but were disappointed that the meeting went into executive session so quickly. While we understand that there is sensitive information being discussed, it is frustrating for staff to be excluded from parts of a conversation that get carried partially into normal session without any idea of when that session will start. Many staff missed out on the discussion about the task force for UA restructure, and we were asked if there was a recording available. I want to take a brief opportunity to bring up again how strongly staff feel that having recordings of these meetings available would be positive. There are already grassroots efforts to record these meetings on external services like Youtube, which leads to concerns regarding the integrity of that content when it is hosted outside of our organization. In the Staff Alliance's view, not making sanctioned recordings of the Board meetings seems like a missed opportunity given how easy it would be to use our existing UA infrastructure.

Briefly, on to Chairman Davies' task force. We know that there isn't a lot of information on this available yet, and that there are still many decisions being made, but I would like to suggest that there be active staff, faculty, and student representation in this body. While I understand that there is opportunity for conflict to arise from the inclusion of those representatives, I think that conflict, when managed appropriately, can result in some of the most positive and meaningful outcomes. The people that work at UA are invested in its success, its future, and the future of the State of Alaska. Please give all of us a seat at the table, and a voice, so that we can participate in the conversations that may very well decide what our University looks like.

Thank you for your time.

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