

Governance Report

November 2019



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

Coalition of Student Leaders

Teresa Wrobel, Vice Chair

The Coalition of Student Leaders had their first meeting on October 22, 2019. The Coalition wanted to thank Vice President Paul Layer and Title IX Coordinator Mary Gower for being proactive in involving students within the process of their respective interests.

The Coalition of Student Leaders had their full summit meeting on November 6, 2019. They elected a new chair and vice-chair to serve for the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year. The summit focused on empowering student voice in the university structure and enhancing efficiency in student governance communication system-wide.

Since the Coalition's last report for the September meeting, student governments have been very busy in involving and asserting themselves into university structuring discussions and how best to represent student input. Student governments have been champions for students, working hard to bring administration to the student body and finding more digestible ways for the average student to understand what is going in their university.

Student governments have also been champions of working together, despite differences. Many leaders from the MAU student governments have been working outside the Coalition to discuss matters of the ever-changing state of the university. Student governments were united in enforcing aggressively that student input was properly heard, and were commonly frustrated and fearful of the letter received from the NWCCU.

The Coalition is overall united in the dissatisfaction with the proposed tuition increases, and sees small justification, as students have had to face tuition increases over the last several years with little obvious return to them. The Coalition is also concerned over next year's allocation from the state legislature despite the compact and the success from the fight last year. The Coalition acknowledges the power and importance of student testimony this year, but also acknowledges that testimony will only remain strong if there is confidence and support from this university's students, staff, faculty, executive administration, and the Board of Regents.

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

Faculty Alliance (FA) currently has two standing working groups: the Common Calendar Committee (CCC) and the Curricular Task Force (CTF).

The Common Calendar Committee, chaired by Megan Buzby, Professor of Mathematics, UAS, has been instrumental in aligning the academic calendars of the three universities. It continues to maintain alignment with the academic calendars, and this year it is also focusing on the course block or course start alignment. The CCC plans to have a report to Faculty Alliance by March 2020. Megan Buzby will provide a brief report to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee on October 31, 2019.

The Curricular Task Force has its origins in the GER Alignment Working Group, which was a three year 'heavy lift' by faculty from across the three universities. Once GERs were aligned, the work of the CTF was to focus on maintaining the alignment of the GERs. The group had two meetings in spring 2019 to discuss ideas on how to maintain alignment, how often they might have to meet, and who would be chair. Unfortunately, the budget issues of summer 2019 and potential move to a single accredited university accelerated the potential role of this committee. The committee met in August and then in September and will be presenting to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee on October 31, 2019. Since the UA system will maintain three separately accredited universities until after UAF goes through its NWCCU accreditation process in fall 2020, the CTF is meeting to compare how each of the three universities address the curricular processes. It has resulted in a webinar on the WICHE Passport, which is a system in which all members of the consortium would be able to have their respective general education courses transfer across different systems, with minimal to no issues for students. This could also potentially solve any future GER misalignment if all three universities move towards adopting the WICHE Passport. The CTF is facilitated by the current Faculty Alliance Chair until spring 2020, and then the current vice chair, Heather Batchelder, will take over and serve as facilitator for the CTF.

The Faculty Alliance held its retreat in Anchorage on October 17-18, 2019 ([retreat agenda](#)). The retreat was an excellent opportunity to have the FA members discuss issues of their respective universities, meet with President Johnsen, VP Layer, and other leadership, such as the three chancellors, and staff and student governance leadership. The fall retreat included Mac Powell, Senior Vice President and State Accreditation Liaison from NWCCU, as a guest to answer questions on accreditation and NWCCU's letter to the University of Alaska regarding clarification on roles and responsibilities and the importance of shared governance. Portions of the meeting were recorded (available [HERE](#)).

The Faculty Alliance members also discussed the NWCCU's September 26, 2019, letter at its standing Friday October 4, 2019, meeting and recommended that an ad hoc task force be established to look at current Regents' Policies to see what specifically could be amended to bring UA into compliance with NWCCU standards. The September 26 letter specifically

addressed issues surrounding the blurred roles of authority around the president and the chancellors. The FA Task force on BOR Policies met twice and identified specific areas in the description of the role of the president and the chancellors that could be amended that would bring UA into compliance with NWCCU, and the State Department of Education. The Faculty Alliance retreat focused on addressing the suggested changes. The Alliance approved [Resolution 2020-08](#) and sent it, along with a cover memo, to the UA BOR the week of October 19, 2019.

The retreat also focused on frustrations in the area of shared governance. Faculty Alliance members requested that President Johnsen include at least a 30-60 minute presentation on what shared governance looks like, and how UA can improve in this area. It was clear from the student testimony at the October 7, 2019, emergency BOR meeting that they felt their voices were not being heard, consulted or incorporated into the ongoing consolidations and program reviews. The Faculty Alliance chair also noted that many, if not all, governance resolutions were likewise being ignored. The Alliance has only received one reply from Chair Davies, and one reply from President Johnsen. It believes that having the BOR learn more about best practices in shared governance would greatly help solve these communication and protocol issues, which need to be resolved, as they were also commented upon in the NWCCU September 26, 2019, letter.

Issues/ideas discussed at the retreat included action items and future initiatives that the Alliance will be addressing. They included:

1. Course sharing/Course block alignment: Work with Academic Council and ask the Provosts to survey their Deans to identify additional issues or programs that are interested in course sharing, or are already doing course sharing, or are planning to do course sharing. Coordinate the survey questions with Megan Buzby and CCC a) Existing course sharing – students should be assessed in terms of how they feel about the distance delivery b) UAS Nursing students could be an ideal group to survey- unless this is already being done. c) Data will be useful, also consider doing ‘pilot programs’ and assess these as well
2. During discussion with VP Layer, UAF faculty proposed establishing a Planning & Budget committee and using transparent decision making, as well as a comprehensive review of all areas of the universities (not just academic programs)
3. Student recruitment outside Alaska – Alliance members discussed marketing special ed teacher education at UAS; northern engineering at UAA and UAF; Indigenous studies; UAF is doing commercials to recruit students from Pacific Northwest and has a regional recruiter there, and will be hiring a recruiter based in southern California later this year
4. For spring FA Retreat, members noted they would like to discuss faculty workload agreements and how service is not being valued by administration; the Faculty

Initiative Fund (FIF) provided funding that resulted in inter-and cross-university collaboration and research

5. November 7 BOR strategic workshop – Alliance members were concerned that the facilitator had not yet been named. Presenters Barbara Brittingham, president of New England Council of Higher Education; Sally Johnstone, president of NCHEMS; Rob Anderson President of SHEO (state higher education officers)
6. The Alliance also discussed how a new ad hoc committee on best practices in shared services would ensure the chancellors have the tools they need to be effective and efficiency to run their own universities. HR should be part of a shared services model that includes the ability of funders to have accountability; the chancellors no longer have the authority to hire or fire anyone due to the HR centralization to SW. Shared Services is a ‘meeting in the middle’ and gives the chancellors the tools they need to run their respective universities. Shared Services is also a new trend in higher education – could be of value to UA.

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

Mathew Mund, Chair

Greetings Chair Davis, President Johnson and members of the board,

First, on behalf of all UA staff, Staff Alliance would like to thank you for all of the hard work over the last few months and fully considering the voice of faculty, staff and students. The decision to slow the restructuring process down during last month’s Board of Regents’ meeting reduced the pressure and allowed staff to dedicate more of their time to the task at hand, serving the mission of the university. We would also like to recognize all of the time and effort faculty, staff and students put into the program review committees. We truly hope their work, while not complete, produced valuable insight into how to move forward.

Staff Alliance is hoping that with the slowdown in some areas, statewide administration can focus more on the in-progress or pending administrative integrations. These integrations are very complex and require a great deal of time and resources to get right and produce the expected cost savings in the first place. Staff who have spent their careers at an accredited university or community campus suddenly find themselves a staff member of Statewide. These transitions require thoughtful and constant leadership from Statewide.

Staff Alliance also commends the increased awareness of shared governance and what it means to the University of Alaska and our accreditors. We are continuing to see more transparency in the decision-making process and inclusion in the groups of people charged

with making decisions. We will continue to be diligent in reminding our leadership of the crucial role shared governance plays in our institution.

While Staff Alliance has felt more included in the decision-making process we are not seeing this fully translate with all staff members within the UA system. This is largely due to the disconnect between them and those who were charged with making the major decisions prior to the September Board of Regents' meeting. Now that the chancellors have been given a more leadership role, we hope that they can bridge this gap and rebuild the trust some staff have in the decision-making process. We do not fault any member of leadership for this break down in trust—rather, it was a product of the political blow UA experienced.

In addition, the Staff Alliance has observed that three-quarters of its work is HR related. With our new HR structure, we have begun to take a lead role in establishing a working relationship with HR to more aggressively address the concerns of staff. These include, but are not limited to, recognition, moral, compensation, hiring practices, etc. We are eager to see this relationship produce positive outcomes for staff over the next few months.

The Staff Alliance has begun to see a shift in the University of Alaska's culture toward a more inclusive shared governance environment. This is new for many staff, as well as executives and managers, and will require all stakeholders to reflect on ideas of shared governance and learn more about how shared governance can be better integrated into all aspects of the university. The Alliance's commitment to staff and leadership is that we will seek out opportunities for inclusion and be present in the decision-making process. We will then communicate what we learn to staff members with the use of well-defined communication best practices. Above all, we want to ensure that staff governance is fulfilling its commitment to staff.

Thank you again for your care and hard work to get the University of Alaska through this challenging time and ensure that we continue to be a strong institution for the future.

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