

Governance Report

February 2020



Coalition of Student Leaders

Audrey Kirby, Chair

The University of Alaska (UA) Coalition of Students Leaders met on January 14, 2020. At the meeting, members elected a new vice chair, Cheri Lynn Mendez from Kachemak Bay Student Association. The Coalition discussed how students felt about the tuition increase across the UA system. It was noted that overall, students were opposed to the tuition increase and also felt that there was a lack of information surrounding the proposal. The chancellors' tuition forums were mentioned however, many students were unaware that they were occurring and the forums took place during a time when many students were busy studying for finals. The Coalition passed a resolution reaffirming its opposition to a tuition increase and asked for student involvement in the initial tuition decision-making process.

The Coalition also met on February 10, 2020. Members discussed student fees (including consolidated fees), differential tuition, and the faculty regent bills currently being reviewed by the Legislature.

The Coalition of Student Leaders will hold its annual legislative conference in Juneau from March 21 to March 24. At the conference, students will have the opportunity to meet with legislators to advocate for the university, network with other UA student governments, and gain knowledge on how the legislative process works. Students plan to hold a rally in support of the University of Alaska on the Capitol steps on Tuesday, March 24.

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.

Audrey Kirby studies political science as an undergraduate student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and plans to graduate this spring. She also serves as the student advocacy director for the Associated Students at UAF.

Faculty Alliance

Maria Williams, Chair

Faculty Alliance has been addressing several areas that include:

- 1) Academic Program review process
- 2) Administrative Program review process

- 3) Identifying possible scenarios to allow course-start alignment for course sharing
- 4) Concerns about Alaska College of Education
- 5) Faculty and staff attrition
- 6) Support of revisions to the UA BOR Policies

Academic and Administrative Review Process

Each of the universities is undergoing individual academic program reviews and will present final recommendations to the Board of Regents (BOR) in April 2020. The Faculty Alliance understands that the budget compact signed by then BOR Chair Davies and Governor Dunleavy will result in smaller universities due to the constraints and upcoming budget cuts for the next two years.

The UA BOR and President Johnsen requested each of the chancellors to move forward last fall with academic program reviews, and the Faculty Alliance is now in the final process of having chancellors and provosts review these with input from shared governance groups in advance of final decisions by the board on recommended program cuts and faculty lay-offs. This is a very heartbreaking process and faculty move forward with great concern about how to re-build after the budget compact cycle ends. The Alliance looks forward to the end of the compact, so that UA will again be able to work with the Legislature on its budget, as that is the purview of their authority.

Several of the governance groups, including the UAA Faculty Senate, have requested that there be more budget transparency and an audit of the Statewide Office's budget. Faculty believe that identifying areas where there is 'bloat' should be identified before academic programs are cut. Faculty Alliance has expressed concern about the millions of dollars being spent on outside consultants that do not result in any substantive results and/or reports.

UAA and UAF are also working through administrative program reviews as well. The budget cuts should not come from academic programs only. Faculty make up 17% of the overall UA budget (including benefits); faculty are not the cost driver.

To that end, the UAA and UAF Faculty Senates requested that administrative reviews also take place. These are in process, but there remains concern that they are not following the same schedule as the academic reviews – so academics will be cut first and then administrative programs. We would like these both to be reviewed simultaneously – even if this process goes past April, it is worth making major financial decisions with all the cards on the table.

Course Start Time Alignment: Course Sharing

The Common Calendar Committee (CCC), chaired by Megan Buzby of UAS, has been working diligently this academic year to identify scenarios that would provide course start time alignment so that course sharing would be less cumbersome. The CCC has provided two scenarios—one in which there is very little course schedule change, i.e. minimal course start time alignment and protecting the 'high traffic' time periods. The second scenario has great start time alignment and was presented to all three Faculty Senates in early February, sent to all governance groups, sent over faculty list serves, and to the provosts and members of VP Layer's Academic Council. Megan Buzby is collecting feedback and the Faculty Alliance

will review this at its retreat scheduled for the end of March. The Alliance plans on having final recommendations ahead of the UA BOR June meeting.

Alaska College of Education

There are concerns among faculty that the Alaska College of Education structure is weak and inefficient. This is resulting in major confusion for the Faculty at UAS, UAF and in particular at UAA. With the loss of licensure of four of the education programs at UAA, the plan was to absorb the UAA Faculty and programs into the Alaska College of Education—and those faculty would be teaching out of UAS and/or UAF. Student transfers happened and although everyone worked very hard, there were over a 130 students that simply left the entire university system and remain unaccounted for. The future of ‘growing our own teachers’ in Alaska is in a negative trajectory. The Alaska College of Education model is not fully developed, and there is no vision for how this is going to operate. This has taken far too long and must be addressed immediately if UA is going to continue to state they support teacher preparation in Alaska. Right now, it is unclear as to what is happening, and what the time frame will be for more effective delivery of teacher education.

Faculty and Staff Attrition

It is clear that the UA system is losing professional staff and faculty are high percentages. This is due to the budget cuts and the budget compact signed by former BOR Chair Davies and Governor Dunleavy. Faculty and professional staff are seeing the writing on the wall and are seeking employment and leaving the state. This is impacting programs, as staff now have to take on additional duties, and faculty are having to teach more as faculty line items are not being replaced. This is not a sustainable situation. Faculty and staff burnout is already obvious across the entire system. The domino effect of having fewer faculty and professional staff is impacting local economies and businesses. The state of Alaska is in an economic downturn and the shrinking university is adding to it. Faculty are also not being recognized for their service contributions—which means faculty are working harder than ever. Again, this is not a sustainable practice.

Policy Audit

Faculty Alliance supports a policy audit of UA BOR Policy and University Regulation and had passed a resolution with possible changes to policies surrounding the president’s and the chancellors’ authority in October; this resolution was supported by all three faculty senates and all system governance groups across UA. We are pleased that the Board addressed this in January and its Governance Committee is working on identify areas in the policies that need updating and revision. Faculty are particularly concerned about the areas of the policies that ‘blur’ the line of authority of the chancellors, provosts and the academic vice president position. Faculty Alliance fully supports the work being done by the Governance Committee and hopes to provide any assistance or feedback.

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.

Maria Williams, Ph.D., is a professor of Alaska Native Studies at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She currently serves as the past-president on the UAA Faculty Senate.

Staff Alliance

Mathew Mund, Chair

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

The Spring Semester is in full swing and staff are working to complete the academic and administrative review processes and develop plans to absorb the budget cuts while also continuing to increase enrollment and serve our students. Staff are both nervous about the upcoming (and unknown) changes to the organization, however, they are overall optimistic that with everyone leading through these difficult times, UA will be a stronger, leaner organization.

With all of this hard work, staff governance sees a clear need to pause and thank the staff for their dedication. That is why staff governance has taken the initiative to ensure that each campus has a Spring 2020 staff recognition event. With HR's support, we are hoping to pull off these events in a short period of time. As HR reorganization settles down over the next year, we hope that HR will take the lead in future years, as staff governance does not have the resources needed to regularly organize such large events. During this year of change, staff governance is happy to step up to ensure staff are recognized for their hard work.

I would also like to thank the Regents again for allowing for and encouraging increased involvement of governance in Board processes. While I do not believe that it was ever the intent to exclude governance, recent actions by the Board, such as during the February 6 Governance Committee meeting, where there was dedicated time for governance to weigh in on the issues and round table discussion at the end, set the stage for an open and honest dialogue where all parties can feel that they are heard.

I would also like to thank all staff who have taken time out of their already busy days to participate on the numerous committees and councils throughout the university. There has been a great deal of discussion in recent months and inclusion of staff only makes those discussions stronger and better able to identify the truth in each perspective. I feel that we are on the brink of knowing what changes need to be made and how we can go about implementing them. Staff are ready to move forward into the future.

As I mentioned in my January verbal report to the board, I feel a sense of optimism for 2020 and hope that everyone can pull together and not dwell on the past but pioneer into the future. Alaska has always been a wilderness where nothing can be taken for granted. Like those before us, we must be innovators to constantly change along with the ever evolving landscape of Alaska.

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

Mathew Mund is the Operations Manager at Residence Life and has been employed at UAF since 2012. He currently serves as the president of the UAF Staff Council.

System Governance Council

Heather Batchelder, Chair

Regents and Stakeholders,

Thank you for your service to the University system. Thank you for this opportunity to share our work.

Current Discussion Topics:

Shared governance, according to policy from the U.S. Department of Education and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), is critical to the success of a public institution of higher learning. As not-for-profit organizations, public service university systems are quite different than for-profit businesses. If you have not come through the ranks in academia, if you will, that may be a new concept. Input from stakeholders and ensuring that access to information is available to all (i.e. transparency in decision-making), and evidence that the input is being utilized in decision making processes are central to shared governance.

NWCCU Standards

The institution articulates its commitment to a structure of governance that is inclusive in its planning and decision-making. Through its planning, operational activities, and allocation of resources, the institution demonstrates a commitment to student learning and achievement in an environment respectful of meaningful discourse.

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates an effective governance structure, with a board(s) or other governing body(ies) composed predominantly of members with no contractual, employment relationship, or personal financial interest with the institution. Such members shall also possess clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Institutions that are part of a complex system with multiple boards, a centralized board, or related entities shall have, with respect to such boards, written and clearly defined contractual authority, roles, and responsibilities for all entities. In addition, authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated in a written contract, described on its website and in its public documents, and provides the NWCCU accredited institution with sufficient autonomy to fulfill its mission.

2.A.2 The institution has an effective system of leadership, staffed by qualified administrators, with appropriate levels of authority, responsibility, and accountability who are charged with planning, organizing, and managing the institution and assessing its achievements and effectiveness.

2.A.3 The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

2.A.4 The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.
Academic Freedom

2.B.1 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

2.B.2 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

The Council is concerned that the Alaska Constitution is being used by Statewide leadership, as an excuse to keep the current status quo regarding BOR policy and the clarification of roles and responsibilities. The NWCCU stated concerns with the lack of shared governance and the lack of clarification of roles and responsibilities between system leadership at statewide and the chancellors of the individually accredited institutions. The chancellors are still operating under the confines of the president's memo that prompted the NWCCU to ask for clarification of roles and responsibilities between the president and the chancellors and demonstrate a real commitment to shared governance.

Mixed messages continue to come from Statewide. Administration states that they are complying with the NWCCU; however, the actions taken at Statewide indicate the exact opposite. The continued lack of transparency in consolidations, the lack of equitable funding for projects common to all universities, and the lack of respect for stakeholder input demonstrates to students, staff, and faculty that leadership at statewide is not earnest in the effort to comply with the NWCCU.

The Board of Regents' Governance Committee Work Plan – Overall, Council members agreed that a May decision would be a reasonable deadline as concerns were expressed that if the policy revision delineating the roles of the chancellors and SW leadership were not completed prior to the Fairbanks site visit, UAF's accreditation may be negatively affected. Legislators assured governance leaders that the Alaska constitution does not preclude the BOR making revisions to their policy.

Council Discussions included the following:

- 1) The need for a statewide audit
- 2) The importance of public testimony during the BOR meetings
- 3) The importance of maintaining that governance reports follow the chancellors' reports during the BOR meetings
- 4) [The BOR expectations statement](#)
- 5) Lack of responses from BOR chair and president to resolutions sent by system governance bodies
- 6) SW leadership continues to present on their goal for one UA throughout the state and outside, utilizing invalid data

- 7) Representatives Adam Wool and Andy Josephson introduced bills advocating for a Faculty Regent to serve on the Board.

Upcoming Agenda Topics

- 1) Athletics - Impact on Alumni and Community Engagement
- 2) Institutional Effectiveness- consolidation occurring with stakeholder input
- 3) Inequitable distribution of funds from statewide
- 4) Academic program reviews
- 5) Administrative reviews
- 6) Legislative Advocacy and Messaging for 2020

Closing:

As we move forward together, carving out the future of higher education in Alaska, we must ensure that we revere the people, culture, and places in which we live. Each university has a mission to honor the place on which they reside and Alaska Native Intellectual Authority (Alaska Native Ways of Knowing). Students, staff, and faculty within the UA System have unique placed-based learning opportunities.

Thank you for being allies with our UA governance organizations (students, staff, faculty, and community members) in your dedication to ensuring that all individuals from diverse backgrounds with varying abilities are successful in their educational endeavors at each of our Universities.

To learn more about the System Governance Council, please visit its website:

<https://www.alaska.edu/governance/system-governance-council/>

The System Governance Council is composed of faculty, staff, students and alumni governance representatives who collaborate on matters of mutual interest and concern to the Coalition of Student Leaders, Faculty Alliance, Staff Alliance, and the alumni associations.

Heather Batchelder, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the Alaska College of Education at the University of Alaska Southeast Juneau campus. She also currently serves as vice chair of the Faculty Alliance and president of the UAS Faculty Senate. She will be chair of the Faculty Alliance in AY21.