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UNIVERSITY
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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 8, 2017

To: Tara Smith, Faculty Alliance Chair

From: James Johnsen, UA President

Re: Response to April 28, 2017 Memo Re UA Enrollment Planning Report

I thank the Faculty Alliance for the thoughtful feedback (April 28, 2017 memo attached) on the Fall 2016 "UA Enrollment Planning Report" working draft by Associate Vice President Oba.

Enrollment strategy planning at our campuses needs statewide effort and commitment. We are all responsible for ensuring our universities are welcoming and engaging for our students. While there are recruitment and retention experts at each of the campuses, and it is recognized there are unique strengths to every campus, our university needs to work together to address our declining enrollment.

Response to Recommendation 1: Differentiate branding and recruitment strategies developed by each university.
Students will be attending a University of Alaska (UA) campus. While it is important for students to have a sense of "home" at their campus, they should also feel comfortable taking classes from other UA campuses, recognizing that all our campuses are part of the UA system.

Response to Recommendation 2: Use existing resources (monetary or intellectual) and expertise where possible.
I am committed to utilizing existing resources within our university system when appropriate and when the resources are available. Our faculty and staff have an important voice, and I always look forward to engaging their expertise. There are, of course, limits to their capacity to take on additional responsibilities.

Dual enrollment is an issue that we are working on with the UA Statewide Academic Council, UA General Counsel and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. However, I think it is all of our responsibility to acknowledge the potential pitfalls and benefits of dual enrollment.

Response to Recommendation 3: Use user-friendly recruiting tools but retain truth in advertising, supporting existing policies at each of the three universities.
The Credit for Prior Learning website http://collegecreditpredictor.org/thec was provided as an example of a tool already available to help students determine if their prior learning might be applied toward earning a degree. It would be the responsibility of the student and the campus to work together to determine what prior learning could or could not be applied. While you do not raise it, I also think credit for prior experience is a worthy area for exploration.

Our students deserve our best. UA can and should adapt our advising and retention practices to help our students earn a quality education that prepares them for their career of choice within a four-year baccalaureate graduation rate comparable to peer institutions. This would be beneficial to students in a number of ways, not the least of which is a lower cost to attend college (four vs six years of tuition and fees).

Response to Recommendation 4: Support additional resources for low-income students.
It is important to support programs that address the needs of all our students. Our campuses work hard to accomplish this goal. As the State budget continues to decline, UA needs to address our budget shortfalls. Over the course of the next few years, one approach is to gradually increase tuition to match our peer WICHE institutions.

Although our tuition will increase, we recognize that UA can and should provide strategic investments based on student financial aid needs and micro-grants. Additionally, a lower per credit hour rate of tuition and/or specific financial aid incentives are needed to reduce student costs for those enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. We are in the process of implementing a pilot program to test the lower CTE tuition rates and its possible success.

Response to Recommendation 5: Make explicit the allocation of resources.
As we develop and implement a UA enrollment strategy for the system, allocation of resources will be shared and discussed with all of the campuses.

JRJ

Attachment (as stated)

cc: Morgan Dufseth, UA System Governance Executive Officer
        UA Summit Team

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Date:	April 28, 2017
To:	James R. Johnsen, President, University of Alaska
From:	Tara Smith, Chair, Faculty Alliance
Re:	UA Enrollment Planning Report

The Faculty Alliance would like to address the "UA Enrollment Planning Report" by Saichi Oba dated Fall 2016.

The Faculty Alliance agrees that our universities' abilities to attract, retain, and graduate Alaskans is central to our missions and fundamental to the financial welfare of our institutions.

However, we do not support the presumption that a statewide solution to enrollment would be either necessary or effective. Indeed, the report itself mentions that many decisions are best left to experts at the universities.

> "The unique missions of each university should be used to define the goals for what students they will recruit, retain, and graduate. Integrating the universities' missions into their enrollment goals is a leading and necessary component of enrollment planning strategy." (p. 2)

Recommendation 1: Differentiate branding and recruitment strategies developed by each university.

We strongly emphasize this recommendation as something to keep in mind in the event of further efforts to homogenize the university experience for students regardless of which university they attend.

Recommendation 2: Use existing resources (monetary or intellectual) and expertise where possible.

The Faculty Alliance agrees with the recommendation of including faculty on these decisions for recruiting and retaining students. A lot of money is going to be spent on this endeavor and the implications will be long-lasting, be they positive or negative. Faculty have a unique vantage point and important voice in determining what makes a quality education - let us not look past the quality to get to the quantity.

We are concerned that yet another consultant (McDowell) was hired to examine the reasons for decline in enrollment, again overlooking the many internal resources at our three universities that are available to answer such questions.

Faculty Alliance finds that the potential pitfalls of dual enrollment have not been addressed in the report. Dual enrollment brings at least as many cons as it does pros. Some high school students are ready for university classrooms and allowing them to take these classes may be a valuable tool for recruitment. However, it must be recognized that not all high school students are ready for the university classroom, pace, or general expectations. Further, if dual enrollment is widely implemented (perhaps as a cost-saving measure for various school districts), it is important for the UA System to acknowledge that these high school students would be entering an environment for adults; the universities should not change to become a substitute or extension of high school.

As well, Alaska's high schools are having trouble with low enrollment and their own struggles with students being passed through coursework without the skills needed to be successful in the next course. University-level courses assume a base level of knowledge and ability gained from high school. Passing up some of those high school courses to get to and through college faster often add to the "holes" in a student's learning rather than filling them.

Recommendation 3: Use user-friendly recruiting tools but retain truth in advertising, supporting existing policies at each of the three universities.

For example, we caution against the widespread advertisement of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) websites that are not associated with a particular UA university. The site http://collegecreditpredictor.org/thec, for example, asks the user a few simple questions about their background then generates a list of several specific courses for which the potential student may be able to receive college credit. The courses listed are not necessarily courses available from the UA universities. While the tool may seem simple and user-friendly, it is not transparent or consistent with the faculty-approved processes a UA student must follow to be granted CPL. Rather than direct returning adult students to a non-UA website, we recommend providing a link to the CPL policies currently in place at each of the three universities.

The UAF CPL Handbook makes a very important distinction between credit for prior learning and credit for prior experience, which should be made clear in any UA publications or communications to students. There is no guaranteed or implied skill that is gained in a person's *experiences*. University credit may be awarded for prior *learning* that is demonstrated by the student through an exam, certification, or portfolio assessed by faculty members. This is especially relevant for course sequences that rely on recent knowledge and competency of material in a prerequisite course (or prior learning) to be successful in the next course.

Regarding advising, the Faculty Alliance agrees that all three universities should work together to provide the best education that fits an individual student's needs and abilities. However, we generally oppose the message that the intent of a college education is to get in and out as fast as possible. The intent is for each student to get a *quality* education and one that prepares them for their career of choice. The UA system should strive and advertise that as its primary message and goal.

Recommendation 4: Support additional resources for low-income students.

The Faculty Alliance recognizes the importance of ensuring an adequate revenue stream from tuition. However, making it more difficult for students of modest means to attend our universities is contrary to our respective missions to serve all the people of Alaska and will reduce socio-economic diversity among our student body. We were therefore pleased by the explicit statement that "more resources for poor students should be made available" (p. 9).

Similarly, we find it disingenuous to use low tuition as a selling point when one of the goals of the plan you have presented to make the UA system sustainable is to increase tuition in the coming years to a level that is comparable to other WICHE universities.

Recommendation 5: Make explicit the allocation of resources.

We understand that recruitment and retention is a high priority, even in these low budget times. To that end, we request that the allocation of resources be explicitly stated, whether implied or direct expenses. For example, the UA Enrollment Planning Report presents a scenario of a student in Kuskokwim using *DegreeWorks* to see if his/her courses fit better into a degree from UAA or UAS (pp. 11-12). This sounds good on the surface, but it strongly implies that the student could then complete a degree from UAA or UAS while staying in Kuskokwim. The Faculty Alliance notes that this scenario requires widespread online courses and vastly improved infrastructure. However, the document does not specifically address allocating resources for this purpose.

The discussion on p. 5 regarding leveraging financial aid mentions tuition waivers. While it is not clear which class of tuition waivers is referenced, it is important to understand that tuition waivers for faculty and their dependents are negotiated benefits and are likely a valuable tool for recruitment and retention of faculty and other employees. Any strategy that involves these tuition waivers should be made with significant input from Faculty Governance and faculty unions.