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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 21, 2017

To: John Davies, Vice Chair, UA Board of Regents

From: University of Alaska Faculty Alliance

Re: Strategic Pathways, Phase I impacts

At the June 2017 Board of Regents (BoR) meeting, as Faculty Alliance (FA) Chair, I was asked to provide information regarding the impacts of Strategic Pathways (SP) Phase I decisions and implementation plans that, in the opinion of University of Alaska (UA) faculty, are having or may have had adverse effects on enrollment. The FA thanks the BoR for their willingness to include this information as they continue to navigate the difficult times UA is currently facing. The following document describes SP Phase I consequences that UA faculty believe are both directly and indirectly contributing to lower enrollment numbers for the coming academic years.

In November 2016, the UAA Faculty Senate, in [Resolution 110416-4](#), voiced their concerns with the process that was, at that time, associated with SP. The UAF Faculty Senate passed a [resolution of no confidence](#) regarding the SP process on February 6, 2017, and [a letter](#) to President Johnsen from the UAS Faculty Senate, dated February 6, 2017, expressed similar concerns regarding the manner in which SP Phase I was proceeding. Specifically, the process was noted as counter to the principles of shared governance and non-existent or even counter-productive results from that effort were anticipated. Of particular concern to the University of Alaska allied faculty was the SP Phase I decision regarding the schools of education at each of the three universities. In a letter to the UA Board of Regents dated November 15, 2016, UAA Professor of Education Policy, Diane Hirshberg, outlined several procedural flaws in the SP Phase I outcome on the schools of education. Dr. Hirshberg's letter also stressed that effective decisions regarding reorganization of UA would always require careful consideration of education outcomes by the faculty if those decisions were to be successful. Collectively, these resolutions and letters emphasize the crucial need for faculty buy-in if UA's reorganizational efforts are to be successful. Subsequent SP phases (i.e. II and III) incorporated noticeable changes including directives aimed at gathering and utilizing faculty input as various options

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were constructed with the end result being more thoroughly vetted options and more productive outcome actualization.

To date, there remains a very large number of UA faculty who believe that the SP Phase I decision to consolidate the three UA schools of education was poorly engineered and that the implementation of that decision will negatively impact not only the quality of the educational experience offered to students pursuing teaching professions at any UA campus, but also the number of students choosing to enroll in those programs. The basis of this skepticism lies in the idea that operating programs aimed primarily at serving the various and dissimilar primary and secondary educational systems of Alaska from a centralized and remotely located administrative office will eliminate diversity, diminish responsiveness and ultimately fail to serve the state's teacher education needs. Diversity in the delivery of teacher education arises from place-based knowledge, which in turn comes from living in and knowing the community one serves. Responsiveness to the needs of that community requires a form of engagement that cannot be achieved remotely; available technology does not and cannot adequately communicate the immediate challenges that are faced daily by people across Alaska. If the University of Alaska is to produce 90% of Alaska's teachers at any time in the future, the programs that produce those teachers must be versed in both the immediate needs of the state as well as the issues that grow out of those needs. Teacher education programs that are constructed, administered and maintained locally are most likely to meet these needs and just as importantly, to engender a faculty workforce that is confident in its ability to create, develop and dispense those programs to their students. Without faculty confidence and buy-in, program quality will decline and declining student enrollment will inevitably follow.

Another largely held opinion among UA faculty is that the infrastructure needed to effectively run a statewide college of education does not currently exist at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) and that the cost to develop such an infrastructure removes any cost-saving incentive. As the Board of Regents is aware, the logistical changes needed for a successful consolidated school of education that serves the needs of the entire state range from administrative issues (e.g. funding allocations) to academic issues that include accreditation and program continuity. Implementation of such changes will require significant internal reorganization and space allocation at UAS as well as a large financial and time commitment, all of which places a functioning statewide college of education relatively far into the future. Furthermore, the well-publicized decision to form a single, UAS College of Education that serves the entire state, administrative efforts to begin the consolidation process and the associated dissenting faculty opinions have not escaped the attention of currently enrolled and potential students across UA, and those students are making their opinions known. In February 2017, the statewide Coalition of Student Leaders passed [Resolution 2017-02](#) titled "In Opposition of the President's Proposal to Consolidate to One College of Education" wherein their objections to a single college of education were clearly stated. In addition, School of Education faculty members across the three universities have directly observed apprehension and

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uncertainty among students about the future of their respective education programs. Unsolicited and angst-filled student comments questioning the future of all programs at UA form the basis of faculty-student conversations across academic disciplines. Education students in particular, are openly discussing degree completion options that avoid what is seen as a program of limited viability as well as one that will lack academic quality and be of limited value as they pursue their teaching career.

Program viability coupled with President Johnsen's commitment to increase tuition at UA to more closely mirror the WICHE average has students investigating post-secondary educational opportunities in states wherein a lower cost of living forms the basis of a more sound investment in their future. Conversations that include the phrase "Why would I stay in Alaska when I can get more for my money down south?" are not uncommon. Economic uncertainty within the state of Alaska itself is another factor influencing student decisions to attend UA. Add to that, the fact that enrollment in a statewide UAS College of Education will render students ineligible to participate in NCAA athletics at UAA or UAF, since they will be, by definition, students of UAS. Thus one more reason a student may reconsider pursuing a degree in education at UA. This trepidation among the student body will inevitably lead to declining enrollment in the near future and translates into rapidly spreading rumors that portend an unlikely enrollment rebound in the years to come for not only the proposed UAS College of Education but for UA in general.

The Faculty Alliance recommends revisiting the SP Phase I decision regarding the education programs at UA through a process analogous to that of SP Phase III. The Alliance believes this effort will produce a viable plan that builds on the existing strengths of UA programs, leverages existing administrative and structural resources, elicits broader faculty support, moderates unease among students and more adequately speaks to President Johnsen's call for 90% of Alaska's teachers by 2025.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share the thoughts and suggestions of the UA faculty as they work towards the continued success of our students and University.

Respectfully,

DocuSigned by:



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Lisa Hoferkamp

Chair, Faculty Alliance

Cc: Gloria O'Neill, Chair, Board of Regents, University of Alaska
James R. Johnsen, President, University of Alaska