



A broad overview of education issues in Alaska, both university and K-12, urban and rural, was presented to the University of Alaska Board of Regents when it met in Kenai in April.

University teacher education and preparation programs have been a high priority for several years because of the shortage of teachers nationally and in Alaska, and because of changing requirements for accreditation and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

Dave Veazey, assistant to the vice president for academic affairs, told the board that the revisions to university teacher education programs that were approved last year are well aligned with the needs for National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation and the requirements of NCLB.

Across the state, Veazey said, data indicates that K-12 schools and districts with high teacher turnover tend also to have lower student performance. "The schools in Alaska that are not making 'adequate yearly progress' according to NCLB are typically rural, small in size and average student body that is 96 percent Alaska Native," he said. "This trend is typical of the rest of the nation where high poverty, high minority schools have less experienced teachers and lower student achievement."

Regents were presented with various policy-level strategies that other states have employed to try to bridge this "achievement gap." These strategies included higher quality teacher preparation, beginning teacher induction and mentoring, incentives for teacher learning, professional development aligned with standards and relevant to the classroom along with higher teacher salaries and the creation of strong university/K-12 partnerships such as professional development schools.

Each of these strategies is a component in addressing the demands of both NCATE accreditation and NCLB compliance. NCATE demands that education faculty collaborate with arts and sciences faculty to ensure both the content knowledge and pedagogy of teaching various content areas is exposed to teacher candidates. In other words, NCATE forces schools and Colleges of Education to be accountable for the content knowledge of their graduates. This complements the requirements of NCLB that ask for a demonstration of content knowledge. Upon graduation from a teacher preparation program, graduates will be required to demonstrate their content knowledge by passing a state-approved examination in each area.

Difficulties center on how to train what NCLB terms "highly qualified" teachers

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The University of Alaska Board of Regents is the governing body responsible for the university policy and management through the president. Regents are appointed by the governor for eight-year terms, subject to legislative confirmation. A student regent is appointed for two years from candidates nominated on each campus. (Regents' term of office shown in parentheses.)

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in small rural villages that have only a few teachers, or, perhaps, only one. Alaska is not set up structurally to respond to these requirements under the current school system. Finding qualified teachers who want to teach and stay in rural Alaska is a difficult task. Fulfilling certain federal requirements in many of these schools is not possible as currently interpreted and can only be tackled through coordinated efforts on the part of the state Department of Education & Early Development, the University of Alaska, K-12 and the federal government, Veazey told the regents.

Regents gave their approval to two new education degree programs at UAF: Certificate in Educator: Paraprofessional (EDPA) and Associate of Applied Sciences in Educator Paraprofessional (EDPA). Both programs were developed in consultation with school district personnel from the College of

Rural Alaska service area, para-professionals and the state Department of Education and Early Development. The EDPA curriculum emphasizes school protocols, classroom methods, management and assessment. The programs will provide students the opportunity to develop the skills and qualities required for employment in a variety of educational settings.

A new mission statement for the University of Alaska Anchorage was unanimously approved: "The University of Alaska Anchorage inspires learning and enriches Alaska, the nation, and the world through UAA teaching, research, creativity, and service. UAA is a comprehensive university that provides opportunities to all who can benefit from education programs of high quality in an inclusive environment rich in diversity. Located in Anchorage and on community campuses serving Southcentral Alaska, UAA is

committed and uniquely situated to serve the needs of its communities, the state, and its diverse peoples."

Regents also approved revisions to the student employee salary schedule, effective July 13, 2003, and directed that the grid be reviewed in two years for possible adjustment at that time. They also approved a new Student Financial Aid policy, and amended another policy to include the position description and authority of the Chief information Technology Officer.

In other actions, the regents approved Resolutions of Appreciation for Student Regent Derek Miller whose term expires in May, and for Martha Stewart, director of Federal Relations, who has resigned to pursue personal interests.

Mission Statement:

"The University of Alaska inspires learning, and advances and disseminates knowledge through teaching, research, and public service, emphasizing the North and its diverse peoples."

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