



UNIVERSITY  
of ALASKA

*Many Traditions One Alaska*

# Regents' Recap

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE UA BOARD OF REGENTS' MEETING September 2005

## Regents Wrestle with Tuition and Budget Issues

### Senior waiver changed

The University of Alaska Board of Regents voted to raise the age for free tuition for senior citizens from 60 to the age of Social Security retirement benefits, which start at 65.

The regents agreed at their September 20-21 meeting in Anchorage to grandfather in students eligible under the old policy as of Sept. 21, 2005. That means people who were 60 on or before September 21, 2005 are eligible to take classes, even if they're not currently enrolled.

The measure was part of a proposal by UA President Mark Hamilton, who additionally proposed a 50 percent discount instead of a full waiver, with the income earned going toward financially needy students. The regents declined to accept that aspect of the proposal.

"We received more public testimony on this issue than any other matter that's been before the board in recent history," said Brian Rogers, chairman of the board. "It's clear Alaskans feel pretty passionately about our seniors."

Hamilton had proposed the adjustment to the senior waiver program in an effort to control costs. The university expects to ask the governor and Legislature this year for an additional \$47.4 million from the state treasury, with the lion's share of that increase going toward escalating retirement, health and negotiated wage increases. Hamilton called on students, seniors and others to show support of the university during this year's legislative session.

### Tuition hike approval

At the same meeting, board members reluctantly approved the fourth 10 percent tuition hike for UA students in four years. However, officials noted that, even with the increase, UA tuition is still lower than many

## Rasmuson Hall



*Pictured from left are Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich, Cathy Rasmuson, Ed Rasmuson, Mary Louise Rasmuson, Chairman Brian Rogers, President Hamilton and Elaine Maimon, UAA Chancellor. University officials attended a luncheon ceremony in which the former Business and Public Policy Building on the UAA campus was renamed Rasmuson Hall for longtime university supporters, Ed and Cathy Rasmuson. Photo by Mike Dineen © 2005 University of Alaska Anchorage*

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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.)*

public institutions in the Lower 48. "This isn't an easy decision for us to make," Regent Cynthia Henry said of the tuition increase. "We realize this affects every student at the university. I think the students understand the need for it."

The increase would bring a semester's worth of tuition for most undergraduates to \$1,530 for the 2006-2007 year. Regents deferred action on a 7 percent increase for the 2007-2008 academic year.

### Super tuition rolled back

The regents also rolled back the price of tuition for UAA's Master's in Social Work program, which at \$366 per credit hour is \$122 per credit higher than the cost for many other graduate programs. The change goes into effect next semester.

The so-called "super tuition" was cited by many students as onerous, in particular for fields like social work, which historically pays quite low. The regents directed the university administration to periodically review other programs charging "super tuition" as well.

Student tuition pays for roughly half the actual instructional cost at UA, compared with the national average of 60 percent. When the increases were first put into effect in 2003, tuition covered 43 percent of the actual cost.

"The best scenario for everyone is to increase opportunities for financial aid," Hamilton said. "No student should be prevented from attending college at one of our campuses because it's too expensive."

The university has increased efforts to promote financial aid with its "February FAFSA Frenzy," in which the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is highlighted in a series of events and activities. The program last February resulted in an increase of 1,700 FAFSA applications on the Anchorage campus last year, university officials said.

Nationally, 63 percent of all undergraduates received some form of financial aid for the 2003-2004 year, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers. In Alaska, the number is currently at 51

percent.

"Alaska students just don't apply for financial aid as much as their counterparts in the Lower 48," said Saichi Oba, interim associate vice president for Student and Enrollment Services. "We're trying to change that."

### Construction projects approved

In addition, regents approved several construction projects, including the Cold Climate Housing Research Center on the Fairbanks campus, an industry partnership with UAF; the \$21.5 million School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences Facility at Lena Point, near the Juneau campus; and upgrades to the UAF Physical Plant.

### Make Students Count Award Winners

President Hamilton presented two more "Make Students Count" awards at the Anchorage meeting. They went to Robin Burdick, an admissions and cashiering clerk for the Mat-Su College Bookstore, and Gail Staudinger, an administrative assistant with the College of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Alaska Native and Rural Development at UAF.

"Robin's service to the university is exemplified by her willingness to go out of her way to service students," Hamilton said. "For example, one of her tasks is to drop the students from Banner who do not pay their fees prior to the payment deadline. She spent an entire Saturday calling each and every one of those students and, by doing so, was able to whittle the drop list down from 568 to 15, thus saving 553 students from not being admitted to the university."

Of Staudinger, Hamilton had this to say before presenting the award: "Gail's supervisors, colleagues and students in the program cite Gail as the heart and brains of the Alaska Native and Rural Development program. For place-committed rural students who are isolated from the system, Gail IS the university, say the faculty and students with whom she works."

The awards were initially presented in June and also included Mary Gower, statewide student services manager, and Cody Bennett, a Help Desk con-

sultant at UAS. Burdick and Staudinger were not available at the June meeting, however, so received the awards at the September meeting instead.

## Making Students Count



Pictured from left are Gail Staudinger, President Hamilton, and Robin Burdick, after receiving the 7th Annual "Make Students Count" Award. Photo by Kate Ripley © 2005 University of Alaska

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### Future Board Meetings

November 1, 2005  
Fairbanks

December 7-8, 2005  
Anchorage

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