

Sept 14, 2016

Dear Colleagues –

After many hours of study and review of the hard work done by dozens of university faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members, I will share my thoughts and initial directions on Phase I of the Strategic Pathways options tomorrow with the Board of Regents.

I greatly appreciate the feedback and suggestions that have come in via the Strategic Pathways web page and at the three forums held over the past two weeks at UAA, UAF and UAS. More than 700 of you attended one of those forums to listen or to express your opinion on the academic and/or administrative options. Many of you also called in and expressed your views to the Board of Regents. Additionally, I have received and reviewed more than 500 comments submitted online or by email.

My thoughts regarding each of the seven areas will be posted to the Strategic Pathways web page tomorrow morning, and I encourage you to read through them as we embark upon the implementation phase. After the regents have had the opportunity to review the proposed direction, I will appoint teams to begin the implementation of the options presented.

In addition to Strategic Pathways, the Board of Regents will take up or hear presentations on a range of critical issues including the current plan of our proposed budget request for FY18. Our FY18 budget discussion will include ideas for tuition and enrollment strategies. After three straight years of budget reductions, our initial discussions with the Governor's office (through which our budget request goes on its way to the legislature) suggest the university should plan for another 5-10 percent reduction in state funding for the fiscal year beginning in July 2018. Rest assured, we will press our case for a budget that supports the programs and services needed to perform our mission for Alaska, but we will need to be prepared for the possibility of a fourth consecutive year of state funding cuts.

The regents also will consider the report on a single vs three institutional accreditations. That report, authored by Dr. Dana Thomas, outlines the “do's and don'ts”, the “cans and can'ts” of one accreditation vs three. The report also identifies opportunities to create greater collaboration among campuses to improve student services, streamline administrative costs and capitalize on the strengths within the university system.

And, there will be a decision on the bond proposal for completing the UAF engineering building and an update on our Title IX progress.

As Strategic Pathways reaches a critical juncture, I will continue to update you on the implementation plans resulting from Phase I, as well as the progress on Phase II of Strategic Pathways that begins October 4 in Fairbanks. As always, you can find all of the information posted at www.alaska.edu/pathways.

You also can follow the board proceedings tomorrow and Friday via the links to the video streaming, and the agenda located at <http://www.alaska.edu/bor/agendas>.

In closing, thank you all for working so diligently to make sure our students have the best possible education experience at the University of Alaska. We have many tough choices to make in these trying financial times, but if we keep our focus on what's best for our students and our state, we'll be the stronger for it.

Sincerely,
Jim Johnsen