

Jenn Capps, PhD

June 10, 2025

Academic Search Firm

Reference: Chancellor: University of Alaska Anchorage

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my application for the position of Chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), a role that resonates deeply with my personal and professional commitment to creating access to public higher education as an engine for community vitality and economic prosperity. Having closely followed UAA's impactful contributions to Alaska and the broader higher education landscape, I am deeply inspired by your commitment to student success, community partnership, innovation, and continuous improvement. My extensive career in higher education leadership, marked by a proven track record of strategic vision, collaborative governance, and transformative growth, aligns well with the ambitious goals outlined in UAA's 2027 Strategic Plan and your vision for the future. I am confident that my experience and dedication make me an ideal candidate to lead UAA in meeting Alaska's workforce needs and enriching its communities.

The Chancellor position description outlines a pivotal leadership role requiring a chief executive officer responsible for all aspects of administration, deeply engaged in teaching, research, and service. As the current Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Cal Poly Humboldt, I have a demonstrated history of driving strategic planning and organizational change best illustrated by stewarding the \$458 million dollar state investment into transitioning Humboldt into a premier polytechnic university. My "superpower," lies in translating the value proposition of a university to diverse stakeholders. I have successfully led academic and institutional goal achievement, implementing clear metrics for success, mirroring the expectation for the Chancellor to engage employees across the institution to support these goals.

A Vision for UAA: Teaching, Research, and Service Beyond 2027

My leadership philosophy is firmly rooted in building a balanced vision of teaching, research, and service that extends well beyond 2027. This involves not only advancing the existing strategic plan but also laying the groundwork for sustained excellence and impact. Internally, I will champion a culture of collaboration and accountability, engaging employees across the institution to support academic and institutional goals with clear metrics for success. This includes fostering quality instruction, expanding academic research and sponsored activities, enhancing outreach, ensuring fiscal responsibility, optimizing operations, and prioritizing safety. My approach emphasizes data-informed decision-making, transparent communication, and a commitment to shared governance, ensuring that all voices—from administrators and staff to faculty and students—are valued and heard in shaping UAA's future.

Externally, I understand the critical importance of stewarding UAA's reputation and relationships. I am adept at developing new philanthropic and research sponsorship opportunities, a skill honed through years of successful fundraising campaigns and cultivating robust partnerships in health, hospitality, aviation and aerospace, and energy. I am a leader who balances decisive action with thoughtful decision-making, always seeking diverse perspectives to inform executive decisions and foster a sense of common purpose that extends across the university and into the wider community. Addressing immediate organizational needs while simultaneously advancing existing aspirations and guiding future strategic planning to position UAA as a leader in higher education are challenges I am eager to embrace.

My experience at Cal Poly Humboldt provides a clear illustration of my capacity to navigate the complexities inherent in higher education today. For example, upon arriving at Cal Poly Humboldt, I inherited a multi-million dollar budget deficit and 30% enrollment decline. Despite these significant hurdles and the onset of a global pandemic, I successfully introduced new academic degree programs and led the institution's transformation toward growth and a balanced budget. This was accomplished by leaning into the university's unique strengths, creating increased access to degree pathways for students, and aligning academic programming with student and workforce demand. This experience directly translates to UAA's need for a leader who can guide the institution through increasing competition, declining student populations, and financial constraints, while boosting overall student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

Prioritizing Students, Fostering Community, and Driving Innovation

UAA's deep commitment to student support and success resonates strongly with my own values. My leadership will oversee initiatives to enhance entry-point experiences, eliminate institutional barriers, implement proactive student outreach and advising systems, and develop comprehensive guidance for engaged learning opportunities across the university and in the community. I believe that a student-centered approach is not just a philosophy but a strategic imperative that underpins all aspects of a thriving university. My track record demonstrates an established pattern of welcoming and fully supporting students from recruitment through graduation and beyond, ensuring their academic and personal growth. The experience of developing a diverse student body and intentionally improving our advising strategies at Cal Poly Humboldt, coupled with a significant expansion of successful place-based learning communities (PBLC), underscores my dedication to putting students first.

I also fully embrace UAA's role as a trusted and respected community partner. My career has been defined by engaging with and earning the trust of communities through developing relationships that bridge university resources with community needs. I will prioritize outreach to build and maintain external stakeholder relationships critical to UAA's success, including secondary educational institutions, community and corporate partners, local, state, and national policymakers, private donors, and fellow university leaders. My strong interpersonal skills are ideally suited to building consensus among university stakeholders, cultivating a positive shared vision, and galvanizing Alaskans to support and achieve UAA's goals. My experience leading the inclusive self-study process to transition to a polytechnic university that invited anyone who wanted to participate, and presenting to over 100 stakeholder groups (internal and external), demonstrates my commitment to collaborative decision-making and broad engagement. This

collaborative approach, rooted in listening and valuing diverse perspectives, aligns well with UAA's search for a leader who can foster a sense of common purpose.

Accelerating Excellence and Growing UAA's Reach

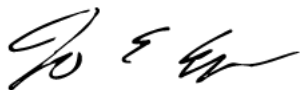
My commitment to continuous improvement is evident in my approach to developing comprehensive programs for mentoring, support, and professional development of faculty and staff at all organizational levels. These efforts are essential for fostering strong teams and ensuring a campus working environment that supports a student-centered learning experience and positive working conditions. Through ethical leadership rooted in transparency and shared governance, I will establish systems that enhance employee engagement and commitment to UAA's shared goals. I will actively engage with faculty and staff to leverage their expertise in addressing university challenges and work closely with colleges to highlight faculty excellence, promote program quality, and enhance UAA's reputation throughout Alaska and the region. My experience leading and serving broad, complex organizations has equipped me with the ability to communicate effectively and transparently, while exhibiting both confidence and humility—qualities essential for building morale and providing stability.

I will prioritize strategies for broad-based recruitment and student body growth, aligning with the Board of Regents Systemwide Attainment Framework. This includes strengthening recruitment efforts for local Southcentral and statewide high school students, returning or nontraditional students, and international and out-of-state students. These efforts are vital for UAA's financial sustainability and for positioning the university as a destination of choice. I am passionate about championing a learning environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, supported, and enriched by opportunities to apply and advance their learning and careers. I will elevate degree and certificate opportunities tailored to the needs of Alaska's students, ensuring programs are accessible both geographically and financially.

The challenges facing higher education today, including increasing competition, declining student populations, and financial constraints, demand a trustworthy leader who can inspire creative problem-solving and engage and retain staff and faculty committed to innovation and excellence. I believe my experience has prepared me to be that leader at the University of Alaska Anchorage and I would be humbled to guide UAA through its next chapter of prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am eager to learn more about this opportunity and to discuss how my vision and experience can benefit the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenn Capps", written in a cursive style.

Jenn Capps, PhD