

*Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

**A REGULAR INTERIM REPORT**

**University of Alaska Anchorage  
Anchorage, Alaska**

October 17-18, 2005

Prepared by  
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*A Confidential Report Prepared for the  
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
that Represents the Views of the Evaluators*

## **History and Visit Overview**

On October 17 and 18, 2005, two Evaluators, Dr. Steven G. Olswang and Dr. Betty DuVall, met with representatives of the University of Alaska Anchorage, as part of its five year Regular Interim Review. Prior to their arrival in Anchorage, Alaska, both evaluators received the Regular Interim Report from Chancellor Maimon, in addition to other related and relevant attachments. An Accreditation Website ([uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation](http://uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation)) with additional related material was fully functional and accessible.

Prior to the visit, Mr. Tom Miller, the University's Accreditation Liaison Officer, worked with the evaluators to arrange the series of meetings that, in the evaluators view, would ensure access to the relevant information. Visit arrangements were well taken care of, and the evaluators express their warmest appreciation for the help we received and all the courtesies we were extended.

### **University of Alaska Anchorage**

The University of Alaska Anchorage is one of the three "Major Administrative Units", or "MAU's" of the University of Alaska. The other two MAU's are the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the University of Alaska Southeast. (Hereinafter, the University of Alaska Anchorage will be referred to as the "University"; specific references will be made when referring to one of its campuses or locations.)

The University is comprised of five campuses: The campus in Anchorage, which has two primary locations; the community campus in Kodiak; the community campus in Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su); the community campus in Kenai Peninsula, which has five locations; and the campus of Prince William Sound Community College, which has three locations. Three of these community campuses – Kodiak, Mat-Su, and Kenai – hold their accreditation under the University; Prince William Sound Community College is separately accredited by the Commission.

The University had its last full scale decennial accreditation in Autumn 2000. Since the time of the last accreditation, the University has prepared a number of Interim Focused reports, responding to four (4) of the seven (7) general recommendations of the 2000 Report, and has hosted two Interim Visits from Commission evaluators.

In addition to the Regular Interim Report, the University has reported, since 1999, almost 50 new programs to the Commission. The Commission requested follow-up reports on many of these, and 22 Focused Interim Reports were filed contemporaneously with the Regular Interim Report. The evaluators were asked to review these reports and to comment on their adequacy while examining the institution as a whole during the site visit. Response to these twenty-two Focused Interim Reports is incorporated under Standard 2, Educational Program and its Effectiveness.

## **The Evaluation Visit**

The evaluators spent two full days on the Anchorage Campus, and during that time, either together or individually, met with over 50 University representatives. Among the individuals and groups the evaluators met with were:

The Chancellor  
The Provost  
The Executive Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services  
The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
The Vice Chancellor for Community Partnerships  
The Vice Chancellor for Advancement  
The Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies  
The Assistant Provost  
The Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic and Multicultural Student Services  
The Assistant Vice Chancellor, Enrollment Management  
The Director, Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment  
The Registrar  
The Manager, Faculty Services  
The Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities and Campus Services  
The Dean, Consortium Library  
The Planning and Budget Advisory Council  
Faculty Senate Leadership and Governance Representatives  
The General Education Requirements Subcommittee of the Faculty Senate  
The Academic Steering Committee for Distance Education  
The Council of Deans and Directors  
The Community Campus Directors  
Faculty members from the Assessment Peer Evaluation Team  
The Assessment Steering Committee  
Vice President of the Student Association

Available to the Evaluators were copies of the background materials, and additional relevant materials were provided while the meetings took place. Copies of draft reports signifying progress to date were examined. In all, there was full access to university personnel and materials.

The Evaluators had both an entrance and exit interview with the Chancellor and her cabinet. At the exit interview, draft commendations and recommendations were presented and discussed.

### **Part A**

The University has responded to all seven (7) of the recommendations found in the 2000 decennial evaluation. Because the Evaluators focused their reviews on the standards, analysis of the recommendations and the institution's response are incorporated into those discussions in Part B of this report.

## Part B

### **Standard 1: Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness**

While the overall organization of the University of Alaska system has not changed, an event in its evolution occurred in 2005. Until this time, the University of Alaska Anchorage – defined as a comprehensive university – had offered no doctoral degrees. A joint Ph.D. in Community Psychology, with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, was authorized by the Board of Regents in June 2005, to be offered beginning in Autumn 2006. And, while it is a joint program with the “Research” university of the system, University of Alaska Fairbanks, it heralds a potential mission shift for UAA within the system.

The University perceives its mission as serving the educational needs of the citizens of the Municipality of Anchorage, and its rural community partners through the community campuses. Further, it affiliates with Metropolitan universities of similar character throughout the lower 48 states. Without perhaps overtly expressing it – though its highly qualified research capable faculty expressed it openly – the University is in an operational climb to offer more doctoral level degrees that may fit its strengths and serve its locales. Such a shift in level – from a comprehensive University, which only offers a masters as its highest degree, to a doctoral university – does require a substantive change if it were to occur, but more importantly, an explicit action or at least a conversation by the Board of Regents.

The University is directly affected by actions at the Statewide Office. At the Statewide level, the Board of Regents in 2003, adopted a Strategic Plan 2009, which incorporated a set of seven goals to guide UA through 2009. Further, the Regents adopted a performance based budgetary model to guide resource allocation among the constituent units.

In operationalizing these measures, the University adopted its own set of goals. It has also moved forward in responding to the Statewide’s five primary performance measures. These measures include Enrollment, Retention, Success in High Demand fields, Research, and metrics in alternative University revenue sources. The University issued reports on these measurements to Statewide in August and October 2005. A visit by the UA President will occur in later 2005 to operationally review the University and its progress toward established goals and performance targets.

The 2000 Decennial Report contained the following recommendation on Planning:

*Standard One states the expectation that planning will be an ongoing effort, with a clear definition of the planning process. Assessment of planning activities, and the use of results of Assessment to identify institutional priorities and allocate resources, leads to another round of the process. The Committee recommends that UAA not only clearly define its planning process, but also demonstrate that it integrates planning and assessment with the development of institutional*

*priorities and the allocation of resources.*

As noted earlier, the establishment by Statewide of goals and measures for a performance based budgetary system have spurred the University to a cycle of its own planning. It created its local Goals 2005 and forced a major improvement in data analysis and use. The University revised its budgetary process to be much more inclusive. A Planning and Budget Advisory Council, made up of administrators, faculty, staff, and students, openly and in a move towards transparency, assesses every units' budget needs against institutional and unit goals and priorities and makes a recommendation on annual budget adjustments to the Chancellor. In 2005, almost \$900,000 was internally reallocated as a result.

Additional planning efforts are evolving. An academic plan revealed this past year is soon to be opened for broader University discussion that will reset the academic program priorities for the University. A strategic plan will be worked on in 2005-06, again giving greater direction for the University. A Facilities and Land Use Plan has been approved by the Board of Regents within the past two years and is undergoing further development for local city review.

With all this happening, it is clear to the Evaluators that the University has taken the recommendations on continuous planning seriously and has responded. Still, it is not yet complete and continued attention to planning must be paid.

## **Standard 2 – The Educational Program and its Effectiveness**

While the university has added a number of new programs since the last full evaluation, resources appear to be adequate to support the programs. Labs, library resources, classroom space and support along with qualified faculty have been added. Enrollment in the programs appears reasonably strong as well. One program, the Massage Therapy Certificate is on temporary hold. One other new program is worth note: the newly established, in cooperation with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, doctorate in Psychology. This program provides a potential model for the establishment of other programs needed to serve the growing urban area of Anchorage. In sum, the University has the capability to offer the 22 programs noted in the Focused Interim Reports filed with the Regular Interim Report.

The university has made significant progress in establishing an assessment program that is working and accepted by faculty as a means of continuous improvement. This is in response to the second recommendation contained in the 2000 Report.

*The University has made progress in the Assessment of educational Effectiveness, including the creation of a guidebook for college deans And the implementation of Assessment in specific courses and programs, which have lead to improvement. However, progress is uneven. The Committee recommends that the University ensure that its educational Program Assessment process be comprehensive, systematic, and institution-wide.*

The assessment program, directed by the Assistant Provost, has been operational for several years. An Assessment Steering Committee (including a representative, who is assessment

coordinator for the unit, from each College) has guided the assessment program design, development and implementation. Faculty have had involvement in the design; the university has chosen a “bottom up” process rather than a “top down” process. As a result, almost all faculty and units see the assessment process as a means of learning about themselves and as a means to improve. Plans are to connect assessment to the newly developed budgeting process, and to extend the process beyond departments and colleges, to the larger units of academic, student services, and then to a university wide assessment/report. Their work has also established a vocabulary common to all colleges, urban and rural entities, adjunct and full time faculty, a desirable outcome.

An Assessment Peer Review Panel, established yearly, reviews the assessment reports using a process whereby each panel member reads each report and evaluates it. In the past few years, this has resulted in a numerical evaluation for each plan and for the college. This has been seen as less than useful, and the reliance on numerical designation will likely be reduced in the future in favor of specific program recommendations.

Another important initiative the university has taken in response to recommendations from the earlier evaluation is the designation and establishment of general education requirements for the Bachelor Degree. The 2000 Decennial Report provided:

*The committee recommends the Faculty Senate formalize a review of general education requirements that addresses their rationale and plan. Input should be sought from the faculty, administrative staff, and other stakeholders throughout UAA. It is expected that the work on articulating and communicating general education’s mission, goals, and objectives of general education will continue.*

The effort to adopt these requirements was led by a Faculty Senate Committee and took almost two years. A favorable faculty vote occurred in 2004. The general education requirements and their subject distribution is included in the 2005-2006 Catalog and are effective with this fall’s entering class. While the list is, for the most part, standard to almost all universities, it does represent considerable exploration on the part of this faculty, and provides a clear pathway for students. The list will also ease the movement of students who so choose from the Associate Degree to the four-year program.

One can hardly imagine a University that could benefit more by innovating uses of information technology. The 2000 decennial report made the following recommendation with regard to Distance Education:

*While the community is pleased to note the effective reorganization of information technology, it recommends the development of a UAA-wide plan for distance education in order to maximize opportunities for students. It is further recommended that planning for distance technology involves the other MAU’s and address program emphasis, technology(ies) to be targeted, funding, facility and student support, and enrollment sources.*

Significant progress on institutionalizing and supporting distance education has occurred, as evidenced by the 80% growth in credit hours generated by distance education since 2000. In part, this was accomplished by decentralizing responsibility for planning and offering distance education to the school and college level. Now, several units offer entire programs through distance learning and virtually all General Education Requirements can be met through distance learning.

While responsibility for academic offerings has been decentralized, Statewide and University decisions about areas of concentration and support systems have been considered. At the Statewide level, a Presidential Ad Hoc Committee on Distance Education, with representation from all MAU's, issued a report in 2004 that was accepted by President Hamilton. This report led to the establishment of a Statewide Distance Education Steering Board, which determines priorities for development of areas of distance learning concentrations.

Locally, an Academic Steering Committee on Distance Education was appointed by the University Provost in 2004. Made up of faculty and staff, the committee formulated and moved through for adoption, a UAA Guidelines for Distance Education Courses. These instructional guidelines describe the expected levels and types of institutional support, student and faculty support, course content and participation expectations, and expected student responsibilities in distance education. Currently under development is a Distance Education Plan that further refines these guidelines. UAA has joined WICHE to participate in inter-institutional delivery of some programs.

A number of issues still remain, and these center on faculty rights, and are essential to be resolved if common buy-in for engagement in distance education is to occur. These issues include ownership of intellectual property rights in distance delivery material, a common compensation and reward structure for faculty involved in distance education, instructional material sharing policy, among others. Some technology challenges also exist, particularly related to improved and expanded bandwidth to some of the community campus locations.

Finally, the Evaluators observed a notable amalgamation of community college philosophy and the philosophy of a teaching university. This is especially evident at the highest levels of leadership within the university. As the university grows in numbers of students seeking admission and in the possible increased prominence of the research function - even if on a limited basis - this laudable definition of the "21<sup>st</sup> Century University" may lose strength. The university should make every attempt to guard against that.

### **Standard 3 - Students**

Student enrollments continue to grow at the University, with close to a 20% increase in headcount enrollment, student credit hours, and classes/sections offered since the 2000 decennial review. This is reflective of the growth in the Anchorage area population, and the shift in Alaska High School student preference to stay at home for undergraduate education rather than to go to the lower 48. Now, over 50% of Alaska High School graduates who go to college do so in state. A marvelous statement about quality recognition.

The University continues to subscribe to a policy of open enrollment. In 2004, the University adopted a new policy in requiring all students to declare their degree/non-degree intentions at time of enrollment. The early identification of degree intentions should allow for greater program and resource planning, better student advising and testing, and more realistic preparation levels depending on program intent. The outcome is a lower number of non-degree students, and consequently, a higher number of degree seekers.

With the increase in students overall, and the increase in students declaring degree intentions, the capabilities of the University to accommodate open, unchecked student choice or demand is questionable. The importance of both the Academic Plan and Strategic Plan are self evident in deciding the overall character of the academic strengths and directions of the University, and in designing its capability over time to meet student intentions.

The reorganization of all student support services under a Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs occurred in 2005. The formation of an integrated unit that is responsible for all aspects of student life (advising, representation, financial aid, residential life, student activities, health, and records) is very welcome by the student body leadership.

#### **Standard 4 – Faculty**

There are no significant changes related to faculty personnel policies since the 2000 decennial review. The number of faculty has increased commensurate with the student body. The faculty are represented by three unions, and one of the three current contracts will be up for renegotiation in the next six months to a year.

Faculty leadership takes an active role in governance, and the Faculty Senate has undertaken a major initiative, culminating this past year, in the adoption of the General Education Requirements for all bachelor degrees, to be effective for all students entering in Autumn 2005.

#### **Standard 5 - Library and Information Services**

The Consortium Library is surely the envy of all University libraries. Completed in October 2004, the \$43 million renovation and new construction has created not only a magnificently beautiful building, but an efficient space to meet both the campus and community needs. It fits perfectly with Chancellor Maimon’s initiative to make the University a “public square”.

The Library, wisely connected to the spine, consists of three interconnected spaces and an attached garage, ensuring public access and use. It houses over one million volumes and has countless student study spaces – individual and group. It houses special collections and is the best location in the State of Alaska for preservation of historic materials.

After student surveys and a college liaison program, the library integrated a considerably higher volume of electronic journals and books. It extended service hours and expanded librarian credit courses for students in research practices. Visits increased about 20%.

The green light atop the library makes it the focal point of the University, and correctly so.

## **Standard 6 - Governance and Administration**

The University has a new leader. Chancellor Elaine Maimon began in Autumn 2004. She has instituted a number of organizational and personnel changes, among them:

- The creation of an Office of Community Partnerships, headed by a Vice Chancellor. Ms. Renee Carter-Chapman, is an experienced University leader and as Vice Chancellor, she is responsible for community, business and industry partnerships.
- The consolidation of student services under a Vice Chancellor. Ms. Linda Lazzell was appointed Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs in 2005.
- Dr. Gebeyehu Ejigu was appointed Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services in 2004.
- Dr. Jan Gehler, the prior Dean of the Community and Technical College, was appointed Interim Provost in 2005.
- The most recent appointment was of Mr. Steve Lindbeck to the position of Vice Chancellor for University Advancement.

All of these appointments have produced a team which can work effectively together. A search for a permanent Provost is presently ongoing.

Among the recommendations in the 2004 decennial report was the following:

*Through recent and continuing developments that include mergers of institutions, the University of Alaska, Anchorage has become an institution with multiple and diverse sites for delivery of educational programming and services. These changes require ongoing attention to governance, budgeting, allocation of resources, and communication among geographically dispersed locations. The Committee recommends specific and demonstrable attention to ensure that all educational units are integral components of the institution's organization.*

The Report refers to this as related to Standard 2.6.4, which provides: "The responsibility for administration of continuing education and special learning activities is clearly defined and an integral organizational component of the institution's organization." We address this recommendation here because we perceive the community campuses not as continuing education units, but as multiple campuses of a University.

A major change in University Administration is the action by Chancellor Maimon to have the community campuses directors report directly to her. These campus leaders are members of the Council of Deans and Directors. The creation of an Office of Community Partnerships, headed by a Vice Chancellor, who is on the Anchorage Campus and is part of the Chancellor's Cabinet, ensures the community campuses have a voice at the central level. The community campuses are represented at the Planning and Budgeting Advisory Council. Faculty of all the campuses are under identical personnel policies and are members of the Faculty Senate and serve on Faculty Curriculum Committees. In all respects, the community campuses are treated as equal partners in a multi-campus, multi-location University.

## **Standard 7 - Finance**

One of the general recommendations from the 2000 Decennial Report provided:

*Because of the division of responsibility between the University of Alaska, Anchorage and the University of Alaska, the committee recommends that UAA and UA ensure that financial systems, reports and communication are accurate, understood by their financial management personnel, and reconciled on a routine basis.*

As in many suborganizations, if the central budgetary system is not responsive or reliable, local units create their own shadow accounting systems, which cannot always be reconciled against central systems. This appeared to be the situation five years ago at the University.

An open budgetary process and common financial reporting structure (Banner) has been developed between Statewide and the University. The Executive Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services of UAA meets regularly with the Statewide Vice President for Finance to ensure consistent communication and understanding of financial matters. A common budget and finance reporting system exists across all units so common data is available to both UAA and UA. A Systemwide Business Council representing the finances offices of the system office and the three Major Administrative Units meet monthly to ensure common approaches to financial decisions and processes.

As noted earlier in the report, a new internal Budget and Planning Advisory Council has been established to review unit budget requests. A common, transparent system is available to each University campus, location, and academic and business unit. Efforts at training staff have been improved to ensure common understanding of how to use the offered systems, thus reducing the need for subunits to build or rely on shadow financial systems.

A single UA office is responsible for performing external audit reports and comprehensive annual financial reports for all MAU's, ensuring statewide consistency across the State.

## **Standard 8 - Physical Facilities**

The 2000 Decennial Accreditation Report contained the following recommendation related to Physical Facilities and Space:

*The Committee is concerned that the University of Alaska, Anchorage may not have sufficient or adequately outfitted space for the effective operation of all of the programs. Of particular note is the serious lack of laboratory space for both instruction and research and for housing grant funded activities. Other issues appear to be a lack of appropriate classroom and faculty office space in certain disciplines and locations. The Committee recommends that the University of Alaska, Anchorage develop and implement short and long-term plans to provide efficient, adequate and suitable space for all of its programs and locations.*

There were several components to this recommendation, including planning and facilities improvements. The University has effectively moved forward on both fronts.

First, with respect to planning, the University began and completed an Anchorage Campus Master Plan, which was adopted in 2004. This Master Plan develops the campus through 2023. Further, a plan is in place to follow the community college strategic academic plans with facilities master plans for those locations as well.

But planning has not slowed down real action. The most spectacular University change is the addition and remodel of the Consortium Library. The \$43 million project not only added 120,000 square feet to the library, but created a signature building for the Anchorage campus. With an adjacent parking garage, the library serves the campus and the city with ease of access. Within the library are a set of small discussion rooms and several larger classrooms, also allowing the library to be used for instruction.

Of almost equal significance was the acquisition of a partially abandoned shopping center and its remodel into a home for the Community and Technical College Dean's Office and one academic division, the Engineering Science and Project Management program, and Enrollment Services. This exceptional space added ten classrooms and a dozen laboratories, and created a user friendly one-stop shopping student service center. Of course, consolidation of these programs to this location off campus freed up significant space on the Anchorage center campus for reallocation among other disciplines and programs.

A third major project was the building of the Ecosystems/Biomedical Laboratory. This state-of-the-art science building adds about 16,000 square feet of needed science related space for instruction and research.

Other renovated space in several existing buildings further enhanced laboratory and research space. It should also be noted that a reorganized administration was created to oversee sponsored research programs under a Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies.

Several additional facilities projects are in the planning, design or construction phases:

- An Integrated Science Building
- Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program building
- Transportation Research Center at Merrill Field

Projects at the Community campuses include:

- Office/classroom space at Mat-Su Campus
- Office/student space at Kenai Peninsula College
- Laboratory/Classroom space at Kodiak Campus
- Office/Student space at the Homer location

## **Standard 9 - Institutional Integrity**

All indicators suggest that the University adheres to the highest ethical standards in its relationships with and among faculty, staff, students, and the broader community. Standard

policies on Academic Freedom, Investigator Public Disclosure, Responsible Conduct of Research, Conflicts of Interest, and other related documents exist, many from the Statewide Office. It appears a revision in the Board of Regents policy on Academic Freedom is under review.

### **Summary**

The University of Alaska Anchorage shows good potential to serve the Anchorage area and Southcentral Alaska. It serves a very diverse population from the classic metropolitan needs of the largest city of the State, to remote populations by way of its community campuses. And, since the merger in 1987 between the University and the community colleges the entire faculty from both seem to have embraced a dedication and devotion to quality instruction not often seen at the largest University in a State System.

The University has paid special attention to the issues raised in the recommendations of the 2000 decennial report, and have utilized the guidance provided by the Standards of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to address these issues and to improve the University.

The change in leadership of the University and the reorganization of Vice Chancellor offices has been received, by and large, as positive movements in the future development of the University. The leadership works well together and with the faculty and students.

Most importantly, the quality of the education offered students has never been higher. Stresses on unabridged growth have to impact policies, but students are the better for those changes.

### **Commendations**

UAA and its leadership team are to be commended for their close and constant attention to utilizing the standards of The Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities as Best Practices.

UAA is to be commended for initiating an inclusive campus effort - - The Public Square - - at better defining its broad purpose of meeting the higher education needs of its multiple communities, including a metropolitan city that contains one-half the population of the State and the rural communities at its community campuses.

The University is to be commended for creating a culture of assessment where faculty are actively involved in developing and reviewing measures of student learning.

UAA is to be commended for its creative and effective efforts at space and facilities planning, as characterized by the University Center, Library addition and renovation, land exchange, and long-term capital plan.

The UAA faculty are to be commended for the adoption of a comprehensive general education requirement for Bachelor degree recipients.

UAA is to be commended for effectively addressing the recommendations of the 2000 Full Scale Report.

**Recommendations:**

UAA has moved dramatically into integrating planning and budgeting, and through the creation of PBAC, has included the multiple University constituencies into an open and transparent process. The next step is to complete the UAA Academic Plan so institutional academic priorities can be used to help shape resource allocation decisions as well.

UAA faculty and leadership see as their common mission to meet the educational needs of the Anchorage community including providing a research agenda and, in selected cases, doctoral programs. This seems, at the moment, inconsistent with the UA central designation of the role for UAA. There must be an open conversation of the longer term mission of UAA within the UA to clarify this for all parties.

A tension exists between the open admissions philosophy that underlies UAA operations and its long-term ability to provide unlimited program support solely based on student demand. UAA must complete its Strategic Plan to guide its decision making around demands, efficiency and effectiveness of use of limited resources.

If UAA is to continue to provide access through distance education, UAA needs to complete its Distance Education Plan to establish overall institutional policies related to central resource support for faculty, the implications of distance teaching on faculty workloads, tenure, pay and other reward structures, and on program priorities for future emphasis.