



## **CHANCELLOR'S COMMENTS: From UAS Chancellor Rick Caulfield**

June 24, 2019

Dear UAS faculty and staff:

The month of June is normally a time to take a deep breath after Commencement and the busy-ness of the regular academic year. It's a time to enjoy longer days, engage with students taking summer classes, catch a fish or two, and carve out special time for enjoying family and friends. This year, June has all of that but it's also a time of significant events affecting our university.

One of those events—and an encouraging one—was a visit that Provost Karen Carey, Associate Vice Chancellor Ronald Cadiente Brown, and I had at the annual meeting of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), held last week in Park City, Utah. Our brief presentation to the full Commission came following the site visit to Juneau in April by NWCCU reviewers. The outcome of that visit was a confidential report shared with commissioners about UAS responsiveness to regional accreditation standards. This review lays the foundation for continuation of our UAS accreditation for the next seven years.

Following NWCCU protocols, we won't know the Commission's final action on our accreditation status for a month or so, but all three of us from UAS felt that our engagement with the Commission was positive. You'll recall the report listed five commendations and three recommendations. Provost Carey spoke directly to the recommendations, noting that they were unsurprising and matters we are already addressing. Associate Vice Chancellor Cadiente Brown spoke about the ongoing efforts UAS is making to incorporate the languages, cultures, and arts of Southeast Alaska's indigenous peoples into education for all UAS students. In the questions raised by commissioners, we did not sense any significant concern or critique. We left the meeting encouraged by the positive response, but of course will be looking for formal affirmation of our status in the next month or so.

One topic that clearly was of interest to commissioners, as it is to us all, is the status of the university's FY20 budget. As I write this, we're advised that Governor Dunleavy will most likely go public with his action on the FY20 operating budget late this week. With the Governor's pending announcement, the UA Board of Regents is planning a special meeting this coming Friday, June 28, from 11am to 1pm. It will be streamed online.

You'll recall that the Alaska State Legislature did not accept the Governor's original proposed GF budget cut of \$134M, reducing it to a \$5M cut (about 2% of total GF). But the Governor has the ability to exercise a line-item veto, leaving great uncertainty about what he may do. Depending on his actions, the Legislature could override such a veto. That is considered a heavy lift by many, so uncertainty continues as we await the Governor's action. The fact that the Governor has not sent out layoff notices to state employees and has publicly stated his plan to act on the operating budget this week greatly reduces any likelihood of a government 'shut down.'

We continue our UA Strong advocacy efforts, including the example of President Johnsen's op-ed piece that I encourage you to read: <https://www.adn.com/opinions/2019/06/23/alaskas-budget-climate-puts-the-value-of-higher-education-at-risk/>

The difference between what the Governor originally proposed for UA and what the Legislature presented to him leaves a high degree of uncertainty that has been tough for students, staff, and faculty. We're likely to get more clarity by the end of this week. In the meantime, I believe it's important to keep our focus on why our university exists—which is to provide opportunity and help transform lives of our students, their families, and our communities. That continues to be important for all Alaskans, and it is a mission that we can all be proud of. I thank you for your continuing advocacy for our university and for your forbearance in these challenging times!

**For the latest on UA Strong advocacy and updates, see the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SupportingUA/>**