

July 18, 2019

Dear UAS Alumni and Friends,

With university budget cuts and vetoes in the headlines, there has never been a more challenging time for UAS. In these difficult times, I'm very grateful for your support as UAS alumni, friends, and donors. I want to use this opportunity to express my gratitude for your unwavering and enduring support and to update you personally about what the uncertainties in the current state budget mean for our students and our university.

First, I want to share some very positive news. I am proud to report that the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) granted renewal of our accreditation for another seven year period. As you know, this accreditation is what allows UAS to grant degrees, award credit, and offer federal financial aid. Achieving this renewal, even in the face of the budget challenges, is a major accomplishment. I'm very proud of our students, faculty, and staff who met with the peer review team on site in Juneau. Those reviewers were tremendously impressed with the positive stories they heard about the quality of a UAS education. The Commission specifically offered commendations about our focus on student success, the access provided by our distance education programming, our collaboration between the three UAS campuses, and our expansion of curriculum focusing on Alaska Native cultures, arts, and languages.

With this positive news in mind, I also want to reassure you—as I have our current and prospective students—that UAS is open and ready for the fall semester. Student success is at the core of our mission, and our dedication to that goal is unwavering. UAS is accepting applications for admission and housing, and we are busy registering students for classes.

You've likely heard that the Alaska legislature and governor continue to debate the deep cuts to the university's budget. Despite tremendous advocacy in support of overriding the governor's budget veto, there were not enough 'supermajority' votes to override the governor's action. Negotiations continue during the legislature's special session, and we hope to know more about the outcome over the next few weeks. UA President Jim Johnsen recommended that the UA Board of Regents, meeting on July 15, declare financial exigency under these circumstances. Financial exigency would allow for expedited change and downsizing throughout UA. The board chose to postpone that action for now, but it will meet again on July 22 and July 30 to consider further action.

We do expect to see significant cuts to our budget, even with the ongoing negotiations. President Johnsen and university leaders are having to consider potential structural changes and downsizing. In this time of continuing uncertainty, legislators need to hear from you why higher education and workforce development matter for our state's future. I encourage you to continue advocating within your communities, with [your legislators](#) and the [Governor](#). You can find advocacy information at <https://www.alaska.edu/govrelations/advocacy/Advocacy.php>. You can stay informed about the latest legislative developments by going to President Johnsen's website [here](#).

Again, I want to thank you for your strong and enduring support for UAS and for Alaska's university system. Your support and investment in UAS lifts the spirits of students, faculty, and staff in these difficult times. If you have questions or comments about any of these developments, please feel free to reach out to me by email or phone.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Rick Caulfield