

7/31/19 -- EMAIL TO UAS EMPLOYEES

Dear UAS faculty and staff:

You've probably heard that the University of Alaska Board of Regents approved a motion yesterday that directs university administration to develop a plan that would consolidate the university system into one accredited University of Alaska. The vote was 8 in favor and 3 opposed. The Board stated that the decision was necessary to provide the best education for Alaska's students in the face of severe reductions in state funding. The Board asked that the plan be developed in consultation with student, faculty, and staff governance groups and be presented for its consideration at the next scheduled meeting in September. A copy of the Board's motion is attached.

You may also know that all three UA chancellors, with support and engagement of their respective provosts and faculty leaders, presented an alternate approach to the Board for dealing with the budget challenges. That 'UA consortium' plan included significant cuts but also envisioned a much higher level of coordination and collaboration among UAS, UAA, and UAF. However, in the end the Board decided to request development of the plan for a single accredited UA. As chancellor, I want to express my appreciation for the teamwork involved in developing this alternative plan, even though it was not accepted by the board.

We have much work to do as a system to develop the plan called for by the regents, and to ensure that our students and our communities' needs continue to be met. I'm confident that there will continue to be a robust university presence in Southeast Alaska in the future even if a single accredited UA is created. Exactly what that will look like, and how it will be structured, remains to be determined.

As we consider this potential shift to a single accredited UA, we also continue to face uncertainty about our FY20 budget. While the current operating budget calls for a \$135M reduction to UA, the legislature is seeking to add back \$110M through HB2001 which will soon be transmitted to the Governor. If this is approved by the Governor, UA would sustain a \$25M cut rather than the \$135M. The Governor's Office has suggested another possible budget scenario that would extend proposed cuts over a two year period. One other uncertainty is how the existing dual appropriation applies, with UAS and community campuses separated out from larger campuses in Anchorage and Fairbanks plus UA Statewide. While there is little doubt that UAS will face cuts, the question of how that dual appropriation is applied could have significant impact on our FY20 budget. We hope to have clarity about that soon.

I know that all of this uncertainty is hard on all of us as employees, and on our students. These are challenging times but we will find a way through them. Here at UAS we will be working through our Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (SPBAC), which meets this week, and our shared governance processes to keep all informed about new developments and to offer avenues for engagement in developing the plan for a single accredited UA. We'll also provide updates as we know them at our upcoming Fall Convocation events.

As Chancellor, I'm very grateful for your continuing good work in support of our UAS mission, especially in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Rick Caulfield
Chancellor