


MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 8, 2011
TO: All Full-Time UAS Faculty
CC: Academic Deans & Campus Directors
FROM: Rick Caulfield, Provost 
SUBJECT: UAS Accreditation and the Fifteen Week Semester

Several faculty members have asked me recently about expectations for student instruction and exams during finals week, and also for faculty presence on our campuses during this fifteenth and final week of our regular semester. Through this memo I hope to clarify these points for all full-time faculty, consistent with accreditation standards, collective bargaining agreements, and the UAS Faculty Handbook.

UAS has long abided by Northwest Commission on Colleges and University (NWCCU) accreditation expectations that an academic year is “instruction equivalent of two semesters of approximately fifteen weeks each...which may include examination days” (NWCCU Glossary¹). When students enroll in our semester-length courses, this is what we as an institution agree to provide and it is what students are paying for through tuition and fees. Thus, it is important that UAS students have fifteen weeks of academic engagement during the fall and spring semester. The course syllabus should reflect this. I note that this expectation complements but is somewhat different than the use of Carnegie Units, which provide for a minimum number of actual instructional minutes and hours in classrooms, shops, and labs.

In practical terms, this expectation means that it is important for UAS faculty to use finals week fully for instruction, exams, student advising and support, and office hours—followed by submittal of grades by the published deadline. Faculty should be accessible to students during this critical time of the semester—when final exams are given, papers are graded, final course grades are due, and instructional portfolios and projects are evaluated and graded.

A copy of current and future academic year faculty calendars (including listings of finals weeks and convocation dates) can be found at: <http://www.uas.alaska.edu/provost/calendars.html>.

Please contact your Dean or Director if you have any questions about these workload expectations. Thank you.

Cc: Chancellor Pugh
President, Faculty Senate
Registrar

¹ NWCCU Glossary can be found at: <http://www.nwccu.org/Glossary%20and%20FAQs/Glossary/Glossary.htm>
11120 Glacier Highway, Juneau, Alaska 99801 • (907) 796-6486 office • (907) 796-6040 fax