

Faculty Alliance
910 Yukon Drive

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October 3, 2016

TO: James Johnson, President, University of Alaska

FROM: Fran Fair, Faculty Alliance

RE: An Assessment of **Single Accreditation vs Three Separate Accreditations** for the University of Alaska's Three Universities

The Faculty Alliance would like to address "An Assessment of Single Accreditation versus Three Separate Accreditations for the University of Alaska's Three Universities" by Dana L. Thomas on July 26, 2016 and the Board of Regents discussion thereof on September 16, 2016. The Faculty Alliance unanimously and vigorously supports the central findings that,

"Single accreditation is neither necessary nor sufficient to achieve cost savings, enhance the student experience, or improve state higher education performance measures. In addition, the process to merge UA's institutions would be disruptive, take at least two years, and might not be approved by the Commission. Therefore, undertaking an accreditation merger at this time is not recommended."

While we agree with the fundamental conclusion and specific recommendation on maintaining the accreditation of each university in the system, we were disappointed at the limited number of faculty consulted in the information-gathering process for the report.

Cost Cutting

The discussion of the “Single Accreditation vs Three Separate Accreditations” report at the September Board of Regents meeting made it clear that a number of regents believe that the organizational changes necessitated by merging accreditations would result in significant cost savings for the entire system. In fact, there are dramatic cost savings that could be implemented much more rapidly and less disruptively than merging accreditation. The regents have as yet not fully exploited powers to influence popular opinions of and attitudes towards higher education generally and that provided by the UA family of institutions specifically. The UA Statewide Offices have real and present opportunities to reduce costs that will improve our system metrics on the cost side immediately. The universities are the direct providers to students and have the most opportunity to impact student outcomes and experiences. The

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levels of academic leadership and with our faculty colleagues across the state. Please do not hesitate to call on us.

Administrative Changes

The Faculty Alliance supports the alignment of administrative functions, such as payment deadlines and policies. The common calendar is an example of overlap between administrative functions and academic issues.

The report emphasizes a common student experience, which has some appeal in terms of streamlining processes and leveraging cooperation. However, there is tension between this idea of commonality and the Strategic Pathways goal of enhancing distinction. Alaskan students generally choose one of our institutions based on their region of origin, which means they likely expect to have an academic program in their interests available. Strategic Pathways seeks to emphasize the role of the Faculty Alliance in the development of the Strategic Pathways initiative.

Any performance-based measures used to evaluate mission fulfillment of the universities must focus on their individual missions. Faculty and administration could collaborate to develop incentives, accountability, and effectiveness.

Academic Changes

Faculty Alliance agrees with alignment of academic policies that enhance the quality of educational opportunities for Alaskan students. Faculty must lead these efforts and have proven themselves effective and innovative. [The following text is a series of garbled characters and appears to be a corrupted or placeholder text.]