



UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA STATEWIDE SYSTEM
VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND RESEARCH
VICE-CHAIR, ALASKA STATE COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH
202 BUTROVICH BUILDING
P.O. BOX 755000
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99775-5000
Phone: (907) 450-8018
Fax: (907) 450-8002

7 July 2006

To: President Hamilton
Chancellors Jones, Maimon, and Pugh

From: Craig E. Dorman, VPAA/R

Subject: Student Readiness and Success

As noted at the June Board of Regents meeting, improving student success – measured by graduation rates – will be a priority topic for my office this year. You may recall that our first step in this direction was to introduce Occupational Endorsements and Workforce Credentials in response to community campus requests. As a second step, we have been examining student preparedness and our developmental education programs. At the SAC meeting on Wednesday, 5 July, the Provosts discussed the report of the Statewide Taskforce to Assure Readiness of Students (STARS, of May 31 2006), national level studies including ACT's recent "Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different?"¹, the analyses leading to UAF's decision to increase its admission requirements for Baccalaureate Degree Programs, and additional data developed by Dave Veazey that compare success rates across our MAUs. While further analyses are warranted, the data in hand clearly indicate that we need considerable improvement.

In recognition that some two thirds of our degree seeking first time freshmen come to the University unprepared for college level work, the Provosts have agreed to the following principles and measures:

- **Each MAU will institute mandatory testing, enhanced advising, and mandatory placement for all students seeking admission to a degree program**, by fall semester 2007. Costs associated with these steps will be included in the MAU FY08 budget requests to be presented 7 August 2006. In addition, MAUs will increase the scope of their testing and advising programs this fall to the degree possible with available resources.

- **Student advancement from developmental courses will be mastery based.** Developmental education courses will be developed or modified to be uniformly standards-based across the system; in many cases, they will incorporate the use of

¹ Answer: The same, with an ACT benchmark of 21 in Reading for Information, and 22 in Applied Mathematics

technology and innovative, intensive pedagogy to help students develop mastery. Once the appropriate courses, technologies, and tests (perhaps a standard, locally developed test for our system?) have been implemented and validated through success measures in follow-on courses, we will have a more immediate metric for the success of developmental programs.

- There is no need at this point to use the same placement testing instrument statewide; however we do insist on comparability standards among the currently used instruments, and that both placement and mastery scores be related to the various developmental courses, and to the objectives of those courses (i.e., what does each developmental course and level of success in that class prepare a student for? SAC noted for example that for some certificate and AA programs, the developmental course itself may suffice for degree completion).

- Utilizing existing relationships with school district superintendents through the Alaska Teacher Placement and Teacher Mentor Programs, we will communicate to them our concerns and actions regarding college and work readiness. We will develop a web site that clearly articulates our standards of college readiness and student success, and includes information on testing instruments that can be employed in the high schools to help inform students and teachers of readiness expectations and to enable measurement with timely feedback. In addition, we will inform the districts how students from their schools have fared in our testing, placement, and developmental programs. Other methods of interacting with the state's secondary system to enhance preparedness will be developed over time.

- In recognition of the anticipated impact of mandatory testing and placement, degree seeking students should receive priority in seat assignments.

Faculty and student service staff must take the lead in implementing these SAC principles and measures. Discussions regarding faculty roles in advising, mandatory placement, and comparability standards, and development of mastery assessment tests and criteria, pedagogical techniques, etc, may be MAU-based, but the groups must interact to ensure system-wide consistency and to share ideas and opportunities. Use of pilot programs designed by faculty is encouraged, and my office is prepared to help fund some of these, with some pilots hopefully starting this fall. Dave Veazey will take the lead for SAC (working closely with the Provosts) in developing and coordinating the needed committees and taskforces.

Cc: Provosts Driscoll, Reichardt, Stell
Saichi Oba (for Student Services Council)
Pat Pitney
Cynthia Henry

Attachments: STARS Report
ACT Report
Student Success Data