



UNIVERSITY of ALASKA  
ANCHORAGE.

# Chancellor's Task Force on Alaska Native Student Success: Final Report

University of Alaska Anchorage  
April 2019

## **Co-Chairs**

Claudia Lampman, Vice Provost for Student Success, Office of the Provost  
Paul Ongtooguk, Term Assistant Professor, School of Education, College of Arts and Sciences

## **Members**

Audrey Alstrom, Regional Director, Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program  
Michael Bourdukofsky, Chief Operations Officer, Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program  
Jeane Breinig, Associate Vice Chancellor, Alaska Natives & Diversity  
Kelly Foran, Director, TRIO Student Support Services  
Beth Leonard, Professor, Alaska Native Studies  
Angela Peacock, Program Manager, Bristol Bay Native Corporation Education Foundation  
Don Rearden, Professor, Community & Technical College  
Libby Roderick, Associate Director, Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence  
Mikayla Savikko, Regional Director, Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program  
Aleesha Towns-Bain, Executive Director, Bristol Bay Native Corporation Education Foundation  
Deanne Woodard, Associate Dean, University Studies  
Mike Ulroan, Regional Director, Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program  
Michele Yatchmeneff, Assistant Professor, Civil Engineering

# Table of Contents

Charge	2
It Takes A Village (Away From Home)	2
(1) National and Local Data on Native Student Preparation and Success	8
(2) Current State Analysis	10
Best Practices for Alaska Native Student Success	11
Overview of Best Practices at US Institutions	11
Cornell University and University of Hawaii at Mānoa	13
Where Best Practices are Employed by UAA Alaska Native Serving Programs	14
(3) Recommended High Impact Interventions/Actions	18
Conclusion	20
Appendix	22
APPENDIX A - UAA Programs Serving Alaska Native Students	22
APPENDIX B - Programs Reviewed	22
References	23

# Charge

In February 2019 UAA Chancellor Cathy Sandeen charged a task force on Alaska Native student success to: (1) conduct a **current state analysis** of existing programs serving Alaska Native students at UAA, (2) review programs effectively serving indigenous and rural students and identify **evidence-based best practices** that could be implemented at UAA, (3) identify 2-3 **high impact interventions** that should be deployed at UAA based on the current state and best-practices analyses, and (4) make recommendations for next steps.

What follows is the work of the task force between February and April 2019. Our work is grounded in the lived experiences of our Alaska Native students. ***So we begin with a story, where you, the reader, will first hear what the college experience is like for many of our Alaska Native students. By no means meant to encapsulate what every student faces, nor the experiences from distinct cultures, think of this as a type of parable, similar to something you might hear from any one of our students. The exception of this story being that you are thrust into his or her role, to help you understand at a deeper level the necessity for the meaningful and systemic change our institution must undertake in order to foster an academic community where Alaska Native students thrive academically, socially, and culturally.***

## It Takes A Village (Away From Home)

You have three first names. Your English name. Your Yup'ik name. And your nickname. From the moment the sun rises until it sets in your village in Southwestern Alaska every person you encounter throughout the course of an entire day will recognize you by one of these three names. The members of your community will look at you, nod, wave, or smile in your direction and this, coupled with them saying your name, will affirm you are exactly what the name of your Yup'ik culture means: *a real human being*.

There was no high school counselor to help your graduating class of five or six students, no one to assist you in preparing for or even applying to college, and the new high school teacher who first suggested that you should go to college left halfway through the year. Perhaps that teacher was also the one who was supposed to give the ACT or SAT, or maybe your village has never bothered to administer that test because of the cost. Whatever the case, you had been thinking about going to college and finally you've decided, and as scared as you are to leave home, you'll give it a try.

A few people in the village suggested that you go to UAF. "They are nicer to Natives there," one says. And another tells you that going to Fairbanks isn't "so scary and dangerous" and the school is "all in one place and not so confusing." While another from your village said,

“RSS, Rural Student Services helped me.” But Fairbanks is yet another plane ride away, and you’ll already need to take a small plane to Bethel and then a jet to Anchorage. A one-way ticket to Anchorage alone will be at least \$600. One way...seems like a real commitment you think, when will you be home again? Will you be home to Slaaviq or starring (a Russian Orthodox celebration)?

You decide to go to UAA because at least you’ve been to Anchorage when family members were in the hospital and when you participated in state athletic events, so you’ve seen the Alaska Airlines Center, and at least you’ll have a few relatives traveling in from the village throughout the year. Perhaps you won’t feel as lonely there.

August comes more quickly than you expected, and you’re not quite prepared because you’ve spent so much of the summer helping your family with subsistence, harvesting fish and gathering berries. You received a scholarship from your village council and your regional corporation, but you need to follow up on those. You saved a little money working in the village store over the summer, and your father gives you some cash as well and tells you to be safe and protect your money and spend it wisely. He tells you to open a bank account when you get to town. Your mother makes sure you’ve got some “real food,” so you’ve got one piece of luggage and a small cardboard box that has salmon strips, a plastic Cool-whip container with akutaq (Eskimo ice cream), several quart Ziploc bags of frozen berries, and a jar of seal oil.

Bad weather delays your first flight out of the village by a few days, or perhaps it was an unexpected death in the village, or you overslept, whatever the case, you’re on the plane headed first to Bethel and then on to Anchorage. You’re so nervous that your stomach cramps, and your palms are sweaty. You stare out the window down at the endless lakes and twisting rivers and try to burn them into your memories. You know people who have left for college and never returned. Some chose not to come back, and others died or disappeared. You vow to yourself that you will return. You want to come back to make a difference in your community. Your family, your friends, your relatives, and the village need you and care about you as much as you need and care about them.

You finally get to Bethel, where you overnight with a relative who lets you crash on his couch, and then find yourself on the morning jet to Anchorage, but only after spending way too much money on food and taxi rides to and from the airport. You’re nervous about the bundle of cash in your wallet, but also wondering if it will be enough to get you by.

The person sitting next to you on the jet to Anchorage speaks so fast you can barely understand her. She’ll ask a question and doesn’t wait for you to answer, before she answers herself. When she asks what residence hall you are staying in, at first you don’t even know what she is talking about. But when she asks, “Do you know what dorm you’re in?”, you shrug. You don’t know, because they never told you. You applied and then you were accepted. And now you’re going. You assumed you would figure that out when you arrived. She continues with the

line of questions, and as the plane touches down she closes with, “What classes are you taking?” and “Didn’t classes start a few days ago?”.

There isn’t time to explain to her about the delay getting out of the village and you’re simply relieved to be getting away from the woman talking so fast, but you know that will be one of the adjustments, that move from Yupik all the time to English. You’re comfortable speaking English, but with outsiders it’s hard. They speak so quickly and they never leave room for silence or thought between words. They don’t see it when you answer with your eyebrows or understand they misunderstand your downward glances.

You pull your bag and box off the luggage carousel and head to the taxi stand. You remember a friend telling you to take an Uber, but when you downloaded that app you found out you needed a credit card.

The taxi driver asks you where you want to go and you say, “UAA.”

“Where at UAA?” he asks.

You shrug. You wish you had some sort of step by step plan of what to do and where to go once you get to Anchorage. Isn’t there just one place you can go at UAA and get help? Everyone is talking so fast, there are so many cars, buildings and paved streets. Every street has a street sign with a stop light. You don’t have pavement where you come from or stop lights. Hardly anyone has a car. Everything feels rushed and crowded. The world is on fast forward and slow motion at the same time.

“Main campus? Student Union?”

You nod and watch nervously as the taxi’s meter numbers race higher like the digits on the village’s only gas pump. Your heartbeat races higher with each additional dollar.

By the time he drops you off in front of the UAA Bookstore the meter reads: \$25.70. Your money seems to be flying from your wallet.

You’ve made it.

You stand in the rain for a moment, holding your cardboard box and your bag. Now what? The parking lot seems crowded and some cars are driving around looking for a place to park, so you must be in the right place. You carry your stuff in through the doors beside the bookstore. Once inside you sit down on a row of benches and pull out your phone. There has to be someone who can tell you where to go and what to do. Someone who can help.

The students walking are on their phone, or they don’t look up or look at you. Strange. Are you invisible? You imitate them and poke around on the UAA website on your phone, looking for a clue as to where you should go.

A voice calls out your name. Your Yup’ik name. For the first time since you’ve left home you feel acknowledged. You look up to find someone you once played basketball or Native Youth Olympics with. In your language she tells you she’s just started classes and begins to ask how you are adjusting to city life, but then sees your bag and the box and realizes your situation.

“Do you know where you are staying yet?” she asks.

You shake your head.

She looks at her watch. “I have class in ten minutes, but after I can help you. Or you can go see if you can check into the dorms. You don’t want to walk that far carrying all that. You can take the shuttle over there. See the shuttle sign? Ask for the one to the dorms. Or wait here for me.”

After exchanging numbers you thank her and breathe a deep sigh of relief for the good luck in running into someone who recognized you. As she’s walking off she rattles off some places to check out that help Native students, a bunch of letters, that you don’t remember, but you’ll get them from her next time. Maybe this won’t be so hard.

At this point you’re embarrassed, starting to get worried, a bit afraid what might happen if you can’t find a place to stay for the night, and questioning your decision to go to college in the first place.

You enter one of the buildings and ask for help and people pass you from one place to the next until you’re talking with someone who says they can help. They will get you temporary housing and in the morning you can come back and they will help you find an advisor. So much information is thrown at you in the span of minutes. There are problems. You’re not registered for classes. You haven’t paid your tuition, fees, or room and board. They don’t have your scholarships.

The people are kind, and trying to help, but from the tone in their voice they seem a bit dismayed at your situation. You want to tell them that no one told you any of this. They might have sent information in letters, but you didn’t always get your mail and it was hard to tell what was important and what wasn’t.

That night you sleep in your temporary room, but you don’t sleep well. You’re lonely. You’re worried about being late. You’re worried about your food that needs to be refrigerated. You’re hungry, too. That night you eat your berries that have thawed. You save your fish strips and seal oil.

The next day people help you figure out your housing situation and they find you an advisor. Many classes are full. You don’t have test scores, so you have to pay to go take an Accuplacer test. Another \$25, but it requires a credit card. So you’ll need to go get a gift card from the bookstore, first. Then go to the University Center for the test, which once you check the map you learn is located far from the center of the university, and you wonder whether you should take a taxi or walk the mile to the testing center, but then decide to ask if the shuttle goes there. Thankfully it does.

By the end of the day you’ve taken the Accuplacer and gone back to the advisor. You weren’t ready for a test mentally and didn’t do as well as you should have. You’ve placed into the zero level math and writing courses. Most of the classes are full, but at least you’ll have enough credits to be considered full time. Tomorrow you’ll find the classes on your list, hopefully you haven’t missed too much or are too far behind already.

They move you from temporary housing into one of the dorm rooms. There are more people in the building than in your entire village. More people in your math class than your entire school. The first full day of classes is exhausting. You're behind. You don't have the text books. The professors talk a mile a minute. They ask a question and won't wait for you to answer. They either think you are shy or stupid or both. You were a good student back home, but here you are just a big fish in a little pond. The other students fire answers back and have laptops and ipads. Your writing professor wants all your writing turned in online. You don't have a laptop or an ipad. If you buy one at the bookstore you'll be out of money.

You're signed up for a meal plan now, too, and you eat at the dorms. At first it's fun to be able to get almost any kind of food you want, but you're missing your food from home. Your salmon strips and seal oil have run out. You're not just craving the meat from home, but your body isn't feeling well either. You feel sluggish and bloated. You want to sleep. To go to your room and curl up on your bed and stay there. You start to remember the seasons back home and your family.

The only exercise you're getting is walking to the shuttle and up and down the stairs to class. The only time you're outside is when you're waiting for the shuttle to campus from the dorms or on the rare occasion when you miss a shuttle and have to walk. Back home you walked everywhere. From your house to the school to the village store. Not to mention the pick up basketball game outside the laundry mat.

You're missing the open tundra, the rivers, the lakes, the ocean. When you are outside, you feel the trees pressing in on you. You're not used to not being able to see out over the land. You want to go down to the ocean, to Cook Inlet, but that is a long ways away. It would cost a lot of money to take a taxi there and back. To walk would be scary. You don't know the trail system, and you've heard stories.

Your studies aren't going so well. You could only afford two of the textbooks you needed. You've been feeling sick and missed a few classes. You keep getting notices about your late tuition. Your scholarships haven't come in yet from the corporation or the village council. You've sent and faxed your tuition bill to them, and you're waiting for them to send the checks so you can pay for school. You didn't know about the FAFSA, nor do you know about the taxes that are required to complete it and there are so many words and terms tossed around by people. It's all so confusing and stressful.

Back home your brothers, uncles, and father, are getting ready for moose hunting. It's the first time in as long as you can remember when you won't be going. You realize you haven't even sat down outside and listened to anything but cars, sirens and noise. You don't ever get out on the land or water. You realize you're almost trapped here. Your life consists of going from your dorm room to the shuttle, to class, back to the shuttle, to your room, and repeat. You have a few friends, but they are doing the same. Some of them aren't going to class at all. Some are drinking and partying. And a couple are always off studying somewhere. One morning you

almost run right into a moose outside the residence hall. Others are also nearly running right into the giant creature. You realize you're not using your senses, and even worry that you're becoming invisible like the moose. You could go an entire day without someone saying any one of your three names.

The coming months will be even more challenging. You'll become even more homesick. The AFN Conference happens and everyone comes to town and expects you to visit with them. Or someone in the village might die. Someone close or someone distant. It does not matter. You will need to go home. A family member might buy you a ticket, but then you might find out the ticket was only one way.

Or you come back, but you're even further behind. You can work hard to try to catch up. You might contact with that girl you ran into outside the bookstore on your first day here. You ask her what were those places who help Native students. She gives you the letters again. NSS. RRANN. ANSEP. And others. Perhaps you'll check them out. Perhaps some professor directs you to one of those places. Perhaps you meet another student who uses those services and invites you to a meeting. You make a connection with one of those organizations, however randomly it might be, and then something changes. They help you fill out scholarships and financial aid forms. They have potlatches. They have activities. They have food, and you learn to follow your sense of smell and seek out those who will share their food with you or who might take you out on the land to pick berries, or even hunt or fish here. These organizations believe in you. You learn there are places to go and people who will take you and teach you about this area and what the land can offer you here. You're directed to other resources on campus, like the Camai room. You're not alone. There are even a few professors on campus who are like you, who know how you feel, who speak your language.

Sort of like that moose who wasn't actually invisible, there are places to go and people who will help, but you have to be able to see them or find them with a little assistance. If you do, then you'll have a place where people might call you by one of your three names. Where they will recognize you as a real human being. Where you'll feel community, something similar to what you feel in the village, and you'll stay until you graduate, or even if you don't on your first attempt, you'll return some day and you will finish.

One or more of your professors won't care or care to understand that you needed to go home. You might not even tell your instructors, you never had to in high school everyone just knew. Family and community matters over school, that's how it was done back home. Plus, going home will bring with it a quick connection back to your family, your food, your culture, and a sense that you matter. You might just stay home and never return to college and just become another statistic, a piece of data and no one at UAA will know your three names.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next section of our report tells *another important story -- how Native students at UAA and across the nation are faring in college.*

# National and Local Data on Native Student Preparation and Success

In Fall 2018, 1,508 Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) undergraduate students were enrolled at the University of Alaska Anchorage, representing about 10% of the total undergraduate student body. About 1 in 2 of these students (54%) were seeking a bachelor’s degree, about 1 in 3 (34%) were seeking an Associate’s degree, and 1 in 5 entered as non-degree-seeking (20%). An additional 64 AN/AI students were seeking a graduate degree, about 7.3% of all graduate students at UAA. Alaska Native students are most likely to complete degrees in the following areas: General Program, Nursing, Nursing Science, Accounting and Human Services.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), 41% of 18-24 year olds in the United States (US) were enrolled in college in 2016. The rate of higher education participation for young adults who are Alaska Native or American Indian (19%), however, is the lowest in the nation; young adults who identified as Asian (58%), White (42%), two or more races (42%), Hispanic (39%), and Black (36%) attend college at much higher rates. The college participation rate for Pacific Islanders was slightly higher than for AN/AI students (21%)<sup>1</sup>.

Native students are also the least likely racial/ethnic group in the US to be retained past the first year of college<sup>2 3 4</sup>. This is also true at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). The table below shows the first-year retention rate (percentage of students who return from first fall to second fall) at four-year public institutions in the US and at UAA for the 2017 cohort. Nationwide, 56% of Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) students at four-year public institutions are retained after their first year of college; at UAA the retention rate for AN/AI students is 42.7%.

**First-Year Retention Rate for First-time Bachelor’s Degree-Seeking Students by Race/Ethnicity and Beginning Enrollment Status, 2017 Cohort at Public Four-Year Institutions and at UAA**

2017 Cohort	US Four-Year Public Institutions <sup>5</sup>			University of Alaska Anchorage <sup>6</sup>		
	Overall	Full-time	Part-time	Overall	Full-Time	Part-time
Racial/Ethnic group						
White	70.0%	78.5%	46.9%	69.7%	72.8%	54.7%
Black	64.8%	70.1%	43.4%	45.2%	60.0%	23.5%
Hispanic	68.8%	75.9%	51.9%	74.8%	74.1%	77.3%
Asian	82.1%	87.3%	62.1%	71.0%	74.8%	56.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	63.2%	70.5%	49.2%	53.3%	60.0%	40.0%
Alaska Native/American Indian	56.2%	66.3%	38.9%	42.7%	44.9%	35.7%
Two or more races (non-Hispanic)	68.5%	73.9%	45.5%	67.8%	69.8%	62.5%

Graduation rates for AN/AI students are also consistently lower than for other racial/ethnic groups in the US and degree completion for Native males is significantly lower than for Native females<sup>1</sup>. These same patterns can be seen in graduation rates for AN/AI students at UAA. The table below shows the six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time bachelor’s degree-seeking students entering in 2010 at four-year, public, open admissions institutions in the US by student race/ethnicity. The UAA rates for the same cohort also appear in the table. As shown below, only about 15% of AN/AI students who begin a bachelor’s degree program at UAA or other open-admissions, public universities across the US graduate within six years. The rate for Native males at open admissions institutions in the US (12.5%) is about 25% lower than it is for Native females (16.5%). At UAA, the gender difference is more pronounced, where the six-year graduation rate for Native males seeking a bachelor’s degree (8.8%) is less than half the rate for Native females (19.8%).

**Six-year Graduation Rate for First-time, Full-time Bachelor’s Degree-Seeking Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2010 Cohort at US Open admissions Public Four-Year Institutions and at UAA**

2010 Cohort	US Open admissions Public Four-year Institutions <sup>7</sup>			University of Alaska Anchorage <sup>6</sup>		
	Overall	Males	Females	Overall	Males	Females
Racial/ethnic group						
White	35.8%	33.9%	37.5%	30.5%	24.1%	35.7%
Black	19.1%	15.8%	21.7%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%
Hispanic	23.5%	21.4%	25.2%	25.0%	23.1%	26.2%
Asian	36.8%	36.9%	36.7%	25.3%	8.6%	40.0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	19.3%	15.0%	23.2%	33.3%	20.0%	50.0%
Alaska Native/American Indian	14.8%	12.5%	16.5%	15.2%	8.8%	19.8%
Two or more races (non-Hispanic)	23.6%	24.4%	23.1%	38.2%	28.6%	45.0%
Total	30.8%	29.1%	32.3%	26.7%	21.0%	31.4%

College readiness or preparation is typically measured by the percentage of students who place into college-level math and writing courses at the institution. At UAA, writing readiness for most degree programs is measured by the percentage of first-time freshman who place into WRTG A111: Writing Across Contexts. For mathematics, college readiness is dependent on degree program. For most baccalaureate programs, a course in college algebra (MATH A121 College Algebra for Managerial and Social Sciences or MATH A151 College Algebra for Calculus) or Elementary Statistics (STAT A200) is the minimum required level of quantitative skills. For some baccalaureate programs and associate programs, however, a lower level of mathematics is required, generally placement into MATH A104: Technical Mathematics, MATH A105: Intermediate Algebra, or MATH A115: The Art of Mathematics.

The table below displays writing and math preparation for the Fall 2018 cohort of UAA first-time students. Overall, 46% of first-time freshman placed into WRTG A111 in Fall 2018; the rate for AN/AI students was 34%. The table also displays the percentage of first-time freshman at various

levels of math readiness. In Fall 2018, 31% of first-time freshman placed into MATH A121, MATH A151, STAT A200 or higher, the minimum math required for most bachelor’s degree programs. Nineteen percent of AN/AI students placed at this level of math readiness.

**Fall 2018 Writing and Math Readiness for First-Time Freshman by Race/Ethnicity at UAA**

Racial/ethnic Group	Percent Writing GER-Ready (WRTG A111)	Percent Math GER Ready (MATH A121, A151, STAT A200)	Percent Math Underprepared (MATH A104, A105, A115)
White	54%	30%	28%
Black	30%	32%	21%
Hispanic	40%	26%	24%
Asian	41%	60%	21%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	38%	45%	32%
Alaska Native/American Indian	34%	19%	31%
Two or more races (non-Hispanic)	58%	32%	25%
Total	46%	31%	27%

*These stories are begging us to intervene.* Indigenous students across the nation and at UAA are less likely to enter college than any other group, enter less prepared academically, drop out at alarming rates, and face great odds if they are to graduate. Native men are at higher risk than women.

## Current State Analysis

The task force convened a Current State Analysis subcommittee to identify programs across UAA that currently serve Alaska Native students and determine a key set of variables to be gathered about each of the programs. Programs were identified three ways: (1) they were listed on the UAA Alaska Natives webpage, (2) they were identified in a previous exercise conducted by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Alaska Natives & Diversity, and (3) they were identified by task force members. The set of variables gathered about each program include:

- The program name and location
- How long the program has existed
- The number of students served in 2018-19 and the percent who were Alaska Native
- Up to 5 major programmatic elements
- The funding source(s), annual budget, number of staff, staff-to-student ratio, and cost per student
- Up to 5 metrics for success, including current data

Current UAA programs on all of our campuses are providing an extensive array of programming to approximately 500 Alaska Native students each year including: academic support and preparation (e.g., pre-college academic engagement, tutoring, advising, peer mentoring, job shadowing, research support), financial resources (e.g., scholarships, research and service project grants, lab equipment, housing assistance), and social-cultural programming (e.g., community outreach, transition and onboarding support, cultural events, connections to Elders, clubs). Alaska Native students interested in careers in Engineering, Math, Natural Sciences, Nursing, Health Sciences, Business, and Psychology have access to programs aimed at helping them succeed in their fields. All UAA students also have the opportunity to learn about Alaska Native cultures, languages, indigenous lands, and rich history through academic courses, minor programs, campus signage, spaces, art, and acknowledgments. That said, we know a large portion of our Alaska Native students are not thriving and are likely not connected in intentional ways to the existing programs and services. We must make sure that all Alaska Native students are given opportunities to take advantage of the existing programs on our campuses and create opportunities where none currently exist.

A summary of each program reviewed can be found [Appendix A](#), and at the end of the next section we evaluate UAA programs according to which currently employ the best practices identified in our review below (see [matrix](#) linked or on page 15-17 below).

## Best Practices for Alaska Native Student Success

A Best Practices subcommittee reviewed over 25 publications focusing on various best practices used in multiple university contexts, primarily focused on US institutions and some international institutions. We identified two US Research I universities that systematically engaged in best practices that demonstrated improved overall institutional outcomes: Cornell University and University of Hawaii at Mānoa. Their data and publications were reviewed and the current Directors were interviewed. While neither of these institutions are close to us as peer institutions, their widely publicized, overarching institutional commitment and cohesive approach is instructive.

### Overview of Best Practices at US Institutions

#### Identification of Barriers

Based upon our review of multiple publications the Best Practices subcommittee first identified the apparent barriers Indigenous students encounter when entering higher education. A list of barriers, as identified by the subcommittee, are as follows:

- Financial need, financial barriers<sup>8</sup>

- Lack of knowledge about how higher education works<sup>9</sup>
- Rural (and some urban) schools not adequately preparing students for college level work<sup>10</sup>
- Bias, racism<sup>11</sup>
- Sense of belonging, homesickness<sup>12</sup>
- Difficult transition from small villages (rural areas) to large urban settings<sup>13</sup>
- Indigenous faculty and staff not at parity (few roles models or people to turn to with similar experiences)
- Little opportunity to learn from/work with Indigenous faculty or about their own histories and place in the community<sup>14</sup>
- Invisibility (lumped with other minorities) \*\* and hypervisibility<sup>15</sup>
- Lack of validation of their cultural strengths \*\*<sup>16</sup>
- Few visible signs the university recognizes their location on Indigenous land \*\*<sup>17</sup>
- Staff not trained in cultural competence for working with Indigenous students \*\*<sup>18</sup>
- University students, staff, faculty not educated in the area's local context as it pertains to Indigenous histories, experiences, etc. \*\*<sup>19</sup>

\*\* Please note any similarities/differences Indigenous students experience as compared to other minorities/economically/disadvantaged/first generation students.

## Identification of Best Practices

The subcommittee identified the following best practices most commonly employed to improve Native/Indigenous student retention and graduation at universities around the US.

This list includes best practices that positively impact all students:

- Peer-to-peer assistance, including advising and mentoring, study groups, living/learning communities, cohort/co-enrollment, weekly meetings<sup>20</sup>
- Faculty mentoring including engagement with faculty research, co-presentations, co-publications, internships, service learning, career visioning, and informal meal sharing<sup>21</sup>
- Financial assistance and workshops for scholarships, internships, and employment<sup>22</sup>
- Bridge programs and tutoring<sup>22</sup>
- Access to affordable family housing and childcare
- Opportunities for students to maintain connections to home/family; Connections to local resources; Service learning with students' communities (opportunities to "give back")<sup>23</sup>

This list includes additional factors positively impacting Indigenous student success:

- Culturally responsive teaching and curricula; Indigenous knowledge embedded and highlighted in the university; Training/workshops for non-Indigenous faculty and staff<sup>24</sup>
- Dedicated community space reflective of AN/AI cultures (Indigenized); Elders, community leaders, and faculty – regular and consistent presence in these spaces<sup>25</sup>
- Leadership consistently acknowledging that the university rests on Indigenous land
- University reflects Indigenous presence in signage, art, languages, and spaces<sup>26</sup>

## Cornell University and University of Hawaii at Mānoa

Cornell University and University of Hawaii at Mānoa (UH Mānoa) are similar in that their institutional strategy to improve Indigenous student success is easy to locate on their websites. Both institutions have large and inviting dedicated spaces. Both institutions have formalized, strong faculty/student and peer mentoring. These include opportunities for advising, research, community engagement, internships, as well as informal unstructured time.

Cornell's American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program (AIISP) and Akwe:kōn was the first residential space for American Indians (AI) in the nation. Serving 300 students per year, the AIISP indicates its retention rate for Native students is "...among the highest in the country"<sup>27</sup>. The house is a residential living/learning community, which all Cornell faculty, students, staff, and students are welcome to join. Cornell's space was designed specifically for AI students, yet its residents are a mix of both AI and non-tribal students. It provides a family-like atmosphere where residents share common interests in learning about past and contemporary American Indian issues. It also serves as a Community Center where the local communities are invited to join in workshops and social activities. The four-year graduation rate for American Indian students at Cornell has increased over time, from 50% for the 1990 cohort to 64% for the 2012 cohort; in 2016, the five-year graduation rate for American Indians was 91%<sup>28</sup> (see [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#) for data and narrative on Cornell's program). Cornell does not provide a rigorous accountability process and we did identify problems in their data collection strategy.

University of Hawaii at Mānoa was awarded a Title III "Strengthening Institutions" grant to expand its current Native Hawaiian student serving spaces to build a "Hawaiian Place of Learning." The grant provided for campus renovations to current spaces, including labs, and classrooms, and enhancing the Native Hawaiian Student Serving areas. UH Mānoa's strategy was developed as part of a system-wide initiative to increase "the number of educated citizens within the state... [and to] support increased participation and completion, particularly for Native Hawaiians and students from underserved populations and regions"<sup>29</sup>.

UH Mānoa's accountability process includes setting goals and using metrics. The University of Hawaii system publishes scorecards for each campus (Hawai'i Graduation Initiative HGI) using disaggregated data to track specific populations. Approximately 17.8% of UH Mānoa students are Native Hawaiian. In 2018, there were a total 12,968 undergraduate students and approximately 2300 of these students were Native Hawaiian<sup>30</sup>. The first-year (75.7%) and second-year (67.3%) retention rates for Native Hawaiian students in 2015 at UH Mānoa were significantly higher than for White, Hispanic, Native, and African American students<sup>31</sup>. Between 2010 and 2018 the four-year graduation rate for Native Hawaiian students at UH Mānoa tripled, increasing from 10.3% to 32.3%<sup>32</sup>. Increases in graduation rates are attributed to an array of student support programs, most of which are offered through Native Hawaiian Student

Services<sup>33</sup>. [Appendix B](#) and [C](#) contain data and narrative on UH UH Mānoa’s program and outcomes.

### Common Themes in Both Institutions

- Institutions own their commitment to Native student success and widely publicize their approach and success.
- Intentionality is a key theme: a strong website presence details the institutional commitment.
- Multi-pronged strategies engaged in a cohesive fashion.
- Native students and their cultures are promoted as an asset.
- Significant faculty/student engagement and faculty leadership.
- Accountability systems and metrics are important.
- Easy access to externally verifiable data important.

### Where Best Practices are Being Employed by UAA Alaska Native Serving Programs

The matrix [here](#) shows which UAA Alaska Native Serving Programs incorporate the best practices identified in the literature review above. There is no doubt that UAA programs are incorporating all of the best practices identified. Only a few of the programs (ANSEP, RRANN, NSS), however, utilize all or most of the best practices, and we know that these programs are reaching only about a third of our Alaska Native students each year. It is imperative that UAA adopt an Alaska Native Student Success strategy that focuses on bringing practices proven to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates to all of our Alaska Native students throughout their time on one of our campuses.

UAA Program	# UAA students served in 2018	Academic Support				
		Peer-to-peer assistance, support, networking mentoring	Faculty engagement, mentoring, connection, coaching	Pre-college academic engagement, bridge programming	Academic support, tutoring, study groups	Cohort model, and living/ learning comm.
Alaska Native Science & Engineering	287	X	X	X	X	X
Alaska Native Community Advancement in Psychology	25	X	X		X	
Recruitment & Retention of Alaska Natives in Nursing	208	X	X	X	X	X
Native Student Services		X	X		X	
Native Early Transition	37	X	X	X		
Alaska Native Business Management Minor	27		X			
Alaska Native Studies Council						
Native Student Council		X				
Alaska Native Courses/GER						
Alaska Native Studies Program	407*		X			
Della Keats	10	X	X	X	X	X
Residence Life Programs		X		X		X
First Year Advising	100			X		
Kodiak College	16%			X	X	X
Kenai Peninsula College	All	X	X		X	
Mat-su College	-			X		

UAA Program	# UAA students served in 2018	Resources			
		Financial support (e.g., scholarships, equipment, research and service grants)	Financial advising, counseling,	Internship, practicum, employment assistance	Access to affordable housing and childcare
Alaska Native Science & Engineering	287	X	X	X	X
Alaska Native Community Advancement in Psychology	25	X			
Recruitment & Retention of Alaska Natives in Nursing	208	X	X	X	
Native Student Services		X	X	X	
Native Early Transition	37		X		
Alaska Native Business Management Minor	27				
Alaska Native Studies Council					
Native Student Council					
Alaska Native Courses/GER					
Alaska Native Studies Program	407*				
Della Keats	10			X	
Residence Life Programs					
First Year Advising	100		X		
Kodiak College	16%	X		X	
Kenai Peninsula College	All				
Mat-su College	-		X	X	

UAA Program	# UAA students served in 2018	Social-Cultural						
		Culturally responsive advising and transition support	Culturally responsive teaching and curricula	Dedicated space and gatherings reflective of culture	Consistent presence of Elders. community leaders, faculty	Opportunities to identify with culture, and maintain connection and give back to community	Acknowledgment of place on Indigenous lands	Indigenous presence in campus signage, art, languages, and space
Alaska Native Science & Engineering	287	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alaska Native Community Advancement in Psychology	25	X		X		X		
Recruitment & Retention of Alaska Natives in Nursing	208	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Native Student Services		X		X		X	X	X
Native Early Transition	37	X		X		X	X	X
Alaska Native Business Management Minor	27		X		X	X	X	X
Alaska Native Studies Council		X	X					
Native Student Council								
Alaska Native Courses/GER			X					
Alaska Native Studies Program	407*		X	X	X	X	X	X
Della Keats	10	X	X			X	X	
Residence Life Programs				X		X	X	X
First Year Advising	100	X						
Kodiak College	16%			X				
Kenai Peninsula College	All		X	X	X	X		X
Mat-su College	-					X		

\* Number is for total number of students enrolled/served in program. This number is not indicative of how many students in this program are Alaska Native. Fall18 - 193; Spring18 - 183; Summer18 - 31.

# Recommended High Impact Interventions/Actions

We were asked to identify several high impact practices UAA could implement quickly to make a difference in Alaska Native student success.

## 1. Acknowledgment of UAA's Place on Indigenous Lands.

We recommend that UAA add on the main page of the Anchorage campus website (and the other campus locations should do this as well for the cultural group whose land they are on) an acknowledgement to the Dena'ina Athabascan people on behalf of all UAA faculty, staff, and students thanking them for being on their cultural land, such as: *The University of Alaska Anchorage would like to acknowledge and thank the Dena'ina Athabascan people for allowing us to be on their land.* We also encourage UAA faculty to add a similar acknowledgment and thanks in their syllabi.

## 2. Pre-College Academic and Social Engagement Programs.

As indicated in our current state analysis, the university is not well-prepared for the many Alaska Native students who arrive and do not test into college level courses. To begin combating these dire statistics, the task force recommends that whatever institutional plan is adopted include a K-12 strategy for encouraging our Alaska Native students to participate in the pre-college programs provided at UAA. There are currently several: ANSEP Middle School Academy, ANSEP Acceleration Academy, ANSEP Summer Bridge, Della Keats Health Sciences Summer Program, and Middle College. Pre-college engagement inspires students to attend college, consider various career paths, and encourages them to arrive prepared for college. Students have reported that participating in these pre-college programs introduces them to the university and helps them feel welcome on campus.

This echoes a recommended solution cited in the Diversity and Inclusion Action plan: *"Develop an outreach program that begins in middle school and continues through high school. This program should be educational in nature and build rapport with the students and the school district employee. A bridging program should supplement the outreach program. The bridging program should bring high school students to the UAA campus for instruction on college readiness and develop the student's knowledge and confidence on the possibility of attending college. The bridging program should provide courses in English, math and college readiness."*<sup>14</sup>.

We also recommend that any strategy developed includes a way to better connect UAA pre-college programs with Alaska Native students in the Anchorage School District and other Alaska Native communities, and to encourage student participation in these programs, through links on websites, literature in their offices, and reaching out to schools via email and through career counselors.

Possible strategies might also include hosting pre-college fairs on the UAA campus (during the State 1A and 2A basketball and Native Youth Olympics tournaments and the AFN Elders & Youth Conference when many Alaska Native students and parents are at UAA). It is an opportune moment to gather UAA's pre-college programs, Alaska Native students, and Alaska Native parents in one location to encourage student participation in these programs.

Formalize an Alaska Native pre-college program to encourage Alaska Native students to consider UAA. This program could offer cultural activities conducted by our Alaska Native Studies department, tours of the campus, practice tests for ACT, ALEKS or Accuplacer, scholarship writing workshops, and financial literacy courses.

### 3. Peer-to-Peer Assistance and Cohort Models.

Alaska Native students need to connect to each other in order to remain and succeed on the campus. It is vital that Alaska Native students are connected to each other so they can help one another navigate the urban campus setting. A cohort model including co-enrollment in several of the same classes is a proven success strategy for all students and this model should be carefully examined for possible implementation for all newly arriving Alaska Native students.

### 4. Living-Learning Communities.

Living-learning communities help Indigenous students be retained and succeed in college. These communities work to bring students, elders, faculty, community leaders, and industry leaders into one space.

- a. It is recommended that UAA explore to what extent departments/colleges/schools might usefully initiate living-learning communities where ones do not currently exist. For example, the College of Health does not have an Alaska Native support program that supports non-nursing students.
- b. Living-learning communities for non-degree seeking Alaska Native students might be a good option as they transition to degree-seeking programs. Alaska Native students could be informed more strategically about the Alaska Native living-learning communities already in place on the campus, such as ANSEP and RRANN.

## Conclusion

UAA must embrace our Alaska Native students long before they arrive on campus, helping them to arrive prepared -- both academically and socially. We must welcome them to a campus that values their cultures, connect them with peers and faculty to mentor them, provide them with culturally-relevant supports, and help them until they cross the finish line, no matter how long that takes. This report is a first step in that direction. The institution now needs to put in place a formal body tasked with oversight of Alaska Native student success and begin to create a holistic, coordinated student success program that meets the needs of all of our Alaska Native students.

*The task force would like to end with two stories.* The following are real accounts of Alaska Native students from rural Alaska. One echoes the struggles illustrated in the introduction, while the second demonstrates how a program, such as ANSEP, can help to alleviate many of the barriers our students face.

***Devan Massin, Wrangell Alaska - Bachelor of Science Electrical Engineering, minors in Mathematics and Physics Fall 2018***

I'm 1/4 Aleut, my Grandmother's family was forcibly removed from her home in St. Paul Island to Southeast during the Aleut evacuations of World War 2. After the evacuations were over, my grandmother's family decided to stay in Southeast. I grew up in Wrangell Alaska and went to Wrangell High School. I dropped out of high school at the start of my junior year and spent a year doing nothing until I moved to Ketchikan and went to school there for a few months, but eventually dropped out again. After another year I decided to get my GED and go to college at UAA, where I struggled with my school until I found ANSEP. ANSEP helped me go from struggling with basic calculus to graduating with a degree in electrical engineering and getting admitted to a graduate program in applied physics at Columbia University.

***Ray Daniel, Bethel Alaska - Freshman in Civil Engineering***

The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) started helping me prepare for my first semester in college when I was just a middle school student, through the ANSEP Middle School Academy. The Middle School Academy introduced me to what the UAA campus was like, how large it was and how it was to live on campus. I then joined the ANSEP Acceleration Academy when I was in high school. Acceleration Academy allowed me see what the workload and expectations for a college course was like. I also began to understand the importance of how to manage my time for a college class and what to do to pass college classes. Now as a first time freshman in my first year of college, I am comfortable because I know where all the buildings are, I know what the workloads are like for each class and I have a cohort of friends that I

consider as close as family. I am also comfortable because of the support that ANSEP students and staff provide us through the ANSEP University Success component. ANSEP students and staff are able to help whether it's from homework through the weekly recitations, advice on which class/professor to take because other ANSEP students are in those same classes or internships to advance my professional career during our Weekly Meetings. I am far more prepared than my friends who did not participate in ANSEP in middle and high school. Now those friends come to me for advice on all of the things I have learned through ANSEP.

# Appendix

## APPENDIX A – UAA Programs Serving Alaska Native Students

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CKzGhn\\_oyrqtWkxG5Z-SneK6C2oT\\_QGYnLU0DALUII8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CKzGhn_oyrqtWkxG5Z-SneK6C2oT_QGYnLU0DALUII8/edit?usp=sharing)

## APPENDIX B – Programs Reviewed

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QFuDfsJWhr13W77DJklm173r4cfhE-XQI5IJ7JlaFjE/edit?usp=sharing>

## APPENDIX C – Additional Data

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1licl8f9M3uxEgwIGksOrsCdq2plefwgrm-9l65OxFoc/edit?usp=sharing><https://docs.google.com/document/d/1licl8f9M3uxEgwIGksOrsCdq2plefwgrm-9l65OxFoc/edit?usp=sharing>

## References

- <sup>1</sup> The Condition of Education 2019 [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_cpb.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cpb.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Home Away From Home: Native American Student's Sense of Belonging During Their First Year of College <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00221546.2016.1257322>
- <sup>3</sup> American Indian/Alaska Native College Student Retention Strategies <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.823.3348&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> National Student Clearinghouse <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport14/>
- <sup>5</sup> National Student Clearinghouse <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport33-first-year-persistence-and-retention/>
- <sup>6</sup> UAA Institutional Research Report <https://anc-powerbireporting.uaa.alaska.edu/reports/powerbi/UAA/IR%20Reports/Students/Retention/UAA%20Graduation%20Rate%20First-time%20Undergrad?rs:Embed=true>
- <sup>7</sup> NCES [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_326.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_326.10.asp)
- <sup>8</sup> *Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan* (DAIP) p.85-89. <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/about/administration/office-of-the-chancellor/diversity-and-inclusion-action-plan/index.cshtml>; *Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success* (EAB, 2018); UAA Qualtrics Survey 2017
- <sup>9</sup> *Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success* (EAB, 2018)
- <sup>10</sup> ANSEP Component Report (2015) 1 page data summary; Evaluation 2015; Ulroan M. "Redefining College Readiness" UAA, 2018.
- <sup>11</sup> DAIP p. 85-89 <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/about/administration/office-of-the-chancellor/diversity-and-inclusion-action-plan/index.cshtml>
- <sup>12</sup> "How Colleges Can Make American Indian Students Feel at Home" *Chronicle of Higher Education* Feb 14 2019; DAIP p. 85-89; "Home Away from Home; Native American Students' Sense of Belonging During their First Year in College" *Journal of Higher Education*.88:5, 785-807; Tachine, Cabrera, YellowBird.
- <sup>13</sup> DAIP p. 85-89

<sup>14</sup> “Creating Visibility and Healthy Learning Environments for Natives in Higher Education” [https://collegefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Creating-Visibility-and-Healthy-Learning-Environments-for-Natives-in-Higher-Education\\_web.pdf](https://collegefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Creating-Visibility-and-Healthy-Learning-Environments-for-Natives-in-Higher-Education_web.pdf) DAIP p. 85-89

<sup>15</sup> *Bringing Visibility to the Needs and Interests of Indigenous Students: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice*. Reyes and Shotton. ASHE-NITE Paper Series; Association for the Study of Higher Education and the National Institute for Transformation and Equity; <https://www.indiana.edu/~cece/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Bringing-Visibility-to-the-Needs-and-Interests-of-Indigenous-Students-FINAL-2.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> ANSEP Component Report (2015); “How Learning Communities Can Keep Higher Ed’s Most At-Risk Students on Track” (*Chronical of Higher Education* 2.27.2019); *Overcoming Barriers to Equity in Student Success* (EAB 2018); ANSEP Component 2015

<sup>21</sup> “Native Hawaiian graduation rate triples at university of Hawaii at Manoa” *Star Advertiser* Dec 5, 2018; “Eia Manoa: Promoting Native Hawaiian Student Success by Building a Hawaiian Place of Learning” (U Hawaii Manoa Webpage <https://www.hawaii.edu/title-iii/programs/2016/09/eia-manoa-promoting-native-hawaiian-student-success-by-building-a-hawaiian-place-of-learning/>)

<sup>23</sup> “Home Away from Home; Native American Students’ Sense of Belonging during their First Year in College” *Journal of Higher Education*.88:5, 785-807; Tachine, Cabrera, YellowBird;

<sup>24</sup> *Bringing Visibility to the Needs and Interests of Indigenous Students: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice*. Reyes and Shotton. ASHE-NITE Paper Series; Association for the Study of Higher Education and the National Institute for Transformation and Equity

<sup>25</sup> Ibid; *Bringing Visibility to the Needs and Interests of Indigenous Students: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice*. Reyes and Shotton. ASHE-NITE Paper Series; Association for the Study of Higher

<sup>26</sup> Camosun Indigenization Plan <http://camosun.ca/learn/school/indigenous-education-community-connections/about/publications/indigenization-plan13.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Cornell University <https://aiisp.cornell.edu/about-us/history/>

<sup>28</sup> Institutional research Planning <http://irp.dpb.cornell.edu/university-factbook/graduation-and-degrees-conferred>

<sup>29</sup> University of Hawaii System Hawaiian Graduation Initiative <http://blog.hawaii.edu/hawaiigradinitiative/>

<sup>30</sup> University of Hawaii at Manoa Fast Facts <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/miro/quick-facts/>

<sup>31</sup> Mānoa’s Racial and Ethnic Diversity Profile March 2016 [http://www.hawaii.edu/diversity/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Manoa-Diversity-Profile\\_Mar30-2016.pdf](http://www.hawaii.edu/diversity/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Manoa-Diversity-Profile_Mar30-2016.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> University of Hawaii News <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2018/12/03/record-setting-graduation-rates/>

<sup>33</sup> UAA DIAP <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/about/administration/office-of-the-chancellor/diversity-and-inclusion-action-plan/documents/Diap%20action%20plan%202017.2022.pdf>

## Resources

Cornell “Graduation Rates for First Time Freshman by Cohort’s Entrance Year.” (IPEDS)

Cornell Retention <https://aiisp.cornell.edu/student-life/retention/>

Cornell “American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program” <https://aiisp.cornell.edu/about-us/mission-and-goals;> <https://aiisp.cornell.edu/about-us/history/>

Cornell Akwe:kwon <https://aiisp.cornell.edu/akwekon/history-akwekon/>

Education and the National Institute for Transformation and Equity; <https://www.indiana.edu/~cece/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Bringing-Visibility-to-the-Needs-and-Interests-of-Indigenous-Students-FINAL-2.pdf>

Kauai, Willy, PhD. Director of Native Hawaiian Student Services. University of Hawaii Manoa. Personal Interviews. April 1, 7, 16 2019.

Pulling Together Series. <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations>

“Leaders and Administrators”

“Teachers and Instructors”

“Foundations;”

“Curriculum Developers”

“Front Line Staff, and Advisors”

“Reconciliation within the Academy: Why is Indigenization so Difficult?” Michael Bopp, Lee Brown, Jonathan Robb. bopp brown robb\_Reconciliation\_within\_the\_Academy\_Final.pdf

Smith, Hingangaroa Graham and Linda Tuhiwai. “Doing Indigenous Work: Decolonizing and Transforming the Academy.” Springer Nature Singapore Pte. Ltd. From Handbook of Indigenous Education. Ed. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2018

U of Hawaii Manoa <https://apps.ksbe.edu/kscholars/2015/04/22/eia-summer-bridge-program-for-incoming-uh-manoa-students/>

Urszula Piasta-Mansfield, PhD. Interim Director, American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, Cornell. Personal Interviews. March 23, April 15, April 17 2019.

Villegas, M. (2010). 500 Maori Ph.D.s in five years: Insights from a successful indigenous higher education initiative. (EdD Dissertation), Harvard University

“With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them” A Public Agenda Report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. <http://www.publicagenda.org/TheirWholeLivesAheadofThem>