




Office of the Chancellor
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

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TO: UAA Caucus

FROM: Chancellor Sean Parnell 

DATE: October 31, 2022

SUBJECT: UAA Caucus Meeting Recap and Follow-Up Report

Summary

On September 15, 2022 the inaugural meeting of UAA Caucus was convened. The UAA Caucus was formed to be a mechanism for collective, substantive conversations among student governance (USUAA), Faculty Senate, Staff Council and UAA's Chancellor and Vice Chancellors. Previously, I received a resolution from the Faculty Senate citing concerns from the past five to ten years which asked, among other things, for improved university-wide communication regarding decision-making. The formation of UAA Caucus at the Anchorage campus was a direct response to this request, and was organized in the spirit of shared governance.

UAA's community campuses are an integral part of who we are as a university. Their unique history in the communities we serve, as well as their specialized academic profile, are an important part of the UAA community. While this effort was initiated at UAA's Anchorage campus, the idea has potential for UAA's community campuses, as well.

UAA Caucus Members

- Katie Scoggins, USUAA President
- Shanone Tejada, USUAA Vice President
- Sean Parnell, Chancellor
- Denise Runge, Provost
- Deanne Woodard, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- Ryan Buchholdt, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services
- Aaron Dotson, Vice Chancellor for Research
- Ian Hartman, Faculty Senate President
- Luann Piccard, Faculty Senate Vice President (absent) – *Submitted Comments*
- Dawn Humenik, Staff Council Co-President
- Rhiannon Calkins, Staff Council Co-President

In advance of our first UAA Caucus meeting, I approached governance group leaders to establish topics which would be helpful to bring forward for discussion. Staff Council leadership expressed a desire to discuss ways to improve morale, including how to have a better HR onboarding experience for new employees. USUAA sought to discuss how to better incorporate online and non-traditional students into campus life. The Faculty Senate and

Chancellor identified continuing discussions about extending our university's strategic plan, UAA 2025, by two years. These topics were unanimously approved for discussion at the outset of the first UAA Caucus meeting, with the topic of HR experience for new employees to be discussed more fully at future meetings.

Meeting Recap and Results

Reaffirming and Extending Strategic Plan to UAA 2027

The UAA Caucus meeting began with a discussion of whether to extend the university's strategic plan (UAA 2025), and rededicate it as *UAA 2027*. Expanding the plan's timeline will create better alignment with UAA's accreditation cycle, and help ensure more complete implementation. UAA Caucus discussed how to receive input from the UAA community on the proposed change, as well as the continuing importance of UAA 2025's mission, vision and aspirations.

There was general agreement that a lengthy input process on the timeline adjustment would be redundant. Rather, members agreed that the Chancellor would compose a letter to governance groups establishing the reasons for the expansion and seek their input. UAA Caucus members stated a desire to primarily focus on implementation of the mission, vision, aspirations of the strategic plan, rather than expending substantial effort obtaining input on a date extension for the plan.

CHANCELLOR ACTION ITEM: *Compose letter to governance groups proposing expansion of the strategic plan to UAA 2027*

- ✓ **COMPLETED ACTION:** *Chancellor Parnell sent the requested letter on September 28th and, after deliberation, USUAA, the Faculty Senate, and Staff Council each restated its support for UAA's strategic plan and continuing its implementation as UAA 2027. (See attached letter and resolutions from USUAA, Faculty Senate, and Staff Council.)*

Improving Morale at UAA

UAA Caucus discussed two issues affecting morale at UAA:

1. Bullying within the faculty and general UAA community
2. Increasing a sense of belonging and pride in UAA for all students

Bullying – UAA Caucus members presented several scenarios of faculty-on-faculty bullying:

- a) Escalating resentment over participatory contributions or workload inequity
- b) Perception of or actual receipt of preferential treatment
- c) Abuse of hierarchical authority, position title or seniority

UAA Caucus discussed how bullying can be addressed and avenues of recourse available to employees. The members' discussion explored whether a more robust and prescriptive policy is required, but also the advantages of making a more positive shift in our institutional culture towards prevention. This included consideration of a broader "See Something, Say Something" campaign, developing employee "Care Teams" similar to those services available to students through the Dean of Students Office, and a recognition of the work done by the Employee Assistance Program.

While the existing Employee Assistance Program is helpful, some UAA Caucus members discussed a need for earlier intervention strategies. Staff Council leadership put forward the idea of an Ombudsman position, which is utilized at other universities and is currently being studied by the council. Provost Runge and VCSA Woodard

offered to supply Staff Council with examples from other universities, and UAA Caucus agreed to have further discussions in the future.

PROVOST & VCSA ACTION ITEM: *Supply Staff Council with other universities Ombudsman models.*

✓ **COMPLETED ACTION:** *Provost Runge researched and provided comparative examples of Ombudsman offices to Staff Council. In addition, Chancellor Parnell followed-up with Human Resources regarding options and services currently available for employees to receive support and relief from bullying.*

- *Notifying the individual and attempting an informal resolution.*
- *Addressing concerns with the supervisor of the individual.*
- *Reaching out to the UA Human Resources Labor and Employee Engagement team at ua-lee@alaska.edu or 907-450-8200.*
- *Reporting to the UA Confidential Hotline at 855-251-5719 or alaska.ethicspoint.com*
- *Reporting allegations of discrimination and sexual misconduct, including sexual assault and sexual harassment to the UAA Office of Equity and Compliance. All mandatory reporters must reach out to their university Office of Equity and Compliance. The contact information is (907) 786-0818 or uaa_titleix@alaska.edu, or you may fill out an incident report here:*

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofAlaska&layout_id=77

Sense of Belonging – UAA Caucus members discussed how to better foster online students' connectedness to the UAA community, as well as pride in our university. One way to create a sense of belonging is hosting campus events that engage online students' personal participation. These could be expanded to other communities as well. Several ideas were brought forward regarding how to enhance the campus experience, including events such as an all UAA student dance, movie nights on campus, and rotating food trucks.

Student feedback reflected the belief that Student Affairs' staff capacity appears directed toward numerous small-scale events which engage few students. Making better use of campus facilities such as the Den, Varsity Grill, the Alaska Airlines Center and Student Union was discussed. USUAA leadership also expressed students' desire to see faculty and staff participate in some student events. A consensus was reached that UAA should focus more effort on larger, more impactful events for the university community, even if that means reducing the number of lesser-attended events to prioritize resources. These activities should also enhance UAA's external engagement with the communities we serve, through events such as athletics and academic showcases or stakeholder campus visits.

VCSA & ADVANCEMENT ACTION ITEM: *Prioritize effective execution of a reduced number of events, which are larger and more impactful for UAA and the communities we serve.*

Katie Scoggin, USUAA President
2921 Spirit Dr, Student Union 201A
Anchorage, AK 99508
University of Alaska Anchorage
(907) 786-1206 | usuuaa.president@alaska.edu



October 10, 2022

Dear Chancellor Parnell,

Thank you for continuing to deliver on the promise of shared governance—which we believe to be a key characteristic of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). We work together and build consensus rather than clash and combat each other. Which leads to the conversation surrounding the extension of UAA 2025 to UAA 2027 to be appropriate.

The Union of Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage (USUAA) has had many conversations about the proposed extension, both within our own organization and greater student body. We believe that it would be beneficial to extend UAA 2025 to UAA 2027 to ensure responsible usage of our resources and a successful implementation of our mission, vision, and aspirations. Therefore, as USUAA we support and encourage you and the University Administration to extend UAA 2025 for another two years.

USUAA stands in full support of the aspirations that we maintain in UAA 2025; namely putting students first; fostering an environment and sense of belonging; establishing UAA as a respected community partner; impacting our community through innovation; and achieving excellence through continuous improvement—all of which culminate and contribute to a quality education and more importantly, an unforgettable student experience.

No institution is perfect, but recognizing our imperfections and providing concrete solutions allows us to transform our aspirations into reality. Recognizing the need to extend the time frame of accomplishing our goals demonstrates a strong presence of cognizance and acute awareness of honoring our promises to students. This ultimately is for the benefit of all members of the UAA community. We support extending UAA 2025 because it provides a solid foundation for all of us to stand on and to achieve excellence in our institutional development without the pressure of realizing a rushed and impractical deadline.

Again, thank you for ensuring students remain part of the conversation, and we look forward to achieving more together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Katie Scoggin
USUAA President



Faculty Senate
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

October 10, 2022

To: Sean Parnell, UAA Chancellor

Fr: Ian Hartman, Faculty Senate President
Faculty Senate Executive Board Members

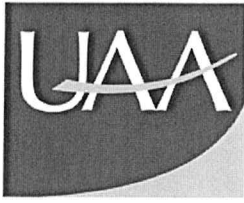
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Ian Hartman
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Re: Extension of 2025 Strategic Plan to 2027

At the October 7, 2022 Faculty Senate meeting, the Senate approved (unanimously) to extend the UAA 2025 strategic plan to 2027.

Please keep the governance groups updated on any information and official changes as they progress. Feel free to reach out for any additional questions.

CC: Heidi Tilicki, UAA Governance Coordinator



Staff Council

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

October 6, 2022

To: Sean Parnell, Chancellor
University of Alaska Anchorage

Fr: Dawn Humenik, Staff Council Co-President
Rhiannon Calkins, Staff Council Co-President

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Dawn Humenik

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Re: Extension of 2025 Strategic Plan to 2027

Greetings Chancellor Parnell,

At the October 6, 2022 Staff Council meeting, the Council approved (unanimously) to extend the UAA 2025 strategic plan to 2027.

Please keep the governance groups updated on any information and official changes as they progress. Feel free to reach out for any additional questions.

CC: Heidi Tilicki, UAA Governance Coordinator