

To: Chancellor Cathy Sandeen

From: Campus Planning Advisory Board (Beverly Shuford, John Stalvey, co-chairs)

RE: Campus Planning Advisory Board Report on Administrative Reviews

The charge of “the UAA Campus Planning Advisory Board shall [be to] advise the Chancellor and members of the Chancellor’s Cabinet on matters pertaining to guiding principles, policies, and resources which impact students[‘], employees[‘] and/or community members[‘] UAA experience. CPAB will ensure fulfillment of the UAA strategic plan by reviewing and providing input on policy and resource decisions that are submitted to [the] Cabinet.”

Our long term mission is to advise how the goals of our next strategic plan are met. However, this plan is still under development and we are faced with an extraordinary crisis. We have been given the ad hoc task to provide our perspective and advice on critical decisions regarding immediate and painful cuts to programs and services for those who must make them.

We have reviewed all twenty-one administrative reviews and the five recommendations based on them submitted by the appropriate Vice-Chancellors and Provost on March 5. However, lack of necessary data and time makes it extremely difficult to suggest specific cuts. We feel, therefore, the most useful thing we can do is to ask critical questions. These include, how might these cuts affect UAA as an institution going forward; what additional areas might prove fruitful of cost savings; and what ought an equitable, deliberate, data informed process for making future cuts look like? These we hope will inform the decisions of the Chancellor and her cabinet.

The underlying principle for these decisions must be what is the imperative of UAA? What is the value added proposition this institution provides the people of Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska? How can it be preserved? Our mission has three critical elements.

- The success of our students in achieving their learning objectives.
- The classes which faculty teach and the research faculty conduct and disseminate.
- To make the benefits of the university equally available to all who wish it.

While these might constitute UAA’s imperative, the imperative need for higher education in Alaska is not confined to UAA. A recent *New York Times* editorial referencing the research of Princeton economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton concluded.

a college degree isn’t simply a marker. Students who attend and graduate from college do better in life than otherwise similar students who didn’t get the same opportunities. Graduates are more likely to be employed, earn more, marry and stay married, be satisfied with their lives, be healthy and live longer. These findings suggest that college itself — both the classroom learning and the experience of successfully navigating college — brings long-term benefits.<sup>1</sup>

Since the decline in budgets began in FY 2015 we have long passed the point where we could do more with less. Now, the only alternative for us to meet the current proposed cuts is to do less, perhaps dramatically so, with less. Budgeting for the university must confront four critical questions.

- What is UAA as an institution obliged to do in order to function (light, heat, safety, personnel)?
- What is UAA as an institution mandated to do in order to function legally (BOR policy, accreditation(s), state and federal regulations)?
- What must UAA do beyond obligations and mandates to facilitate the work of faculty and staff to meet the needs of students?
- What else can UAA do to generate revenue which will permit us to grow beyond these basic objectives?

Our focus on immediate needs has made it impossible to pay sufficient attention to longer term planning. The necessity to pursue immediate cuts (whether or not they can actually realize immediate savings) leaves us unable to pursue investments that might grow programs and generate additional revenue.

Sadly, at no point in the current round of cuts mandated by the “budget compact” of August 2019 was any thought given to what the university actually required to perform all of its basic functions. We were given an arbitrary number and required to make do. It may not be possible to come up with a figure that would actually equate to what the answers to these four questions cost. Certainly, given the difficulties currently encountered, the prospect of making additional required cuts proposed for next fiscal year is daunting.

We are also acutely aware that UAA is but one of three separately accredited universities operating under the supervision of the statewide administrative authority. This raises several additional questions which have a major bearing on our capacity to meet this crisis.

- What is UAA permitted to do within the confines of Alaska’s system of higher education?
- What is the basic rationale for the allocation of current levels of state support to UAA?
- Is there a more sensible, equitable, rational means of allocating state support for UAA?

It was only last October that the Board of Regents authorized the chancellors to manage the cuts mandated for their respective institutions while giving them wider latitude to pursue fund raising. Exactly what we can expect to accomplish or be permitted to attempt within this new framework is not yet well understood.

The administrative reviews required each individual reporting entity to answer seven questions.

However, we feel that a more thoroughgoing process needs to take a broader, institutional approach. We suggest several questions that might usefully be asked.

- What prospects for costs savings and productive community partnerships might be achieved by outsourcing various functions rather than doing them in house?
- What prospects for additional program support might be achieved by corporate sponsorships (especially those for whom we produce qualified graduates)?
- What prospects for costs savings might be achieved by a vigorous partnership with the municipality of Anchorage or communities which host branch campuses?
- How might administrative functions be combined within administrative and academic units by prioritizing the improved performance of core functions over maintaining the sanctity of organizational charts? How can our administrative process be made more cost effective?
- How can we make the most efficient use of existing university facilities broadly defined? Are there university functions which can be shared across campuses for the benefit of all students?
- What prospects exist for funding certain functions out of other (non-Fund 1) revenue streams?
- How do we ensure equitable burden sharing in the matter of furloughs of staff and faculty working for the university?
- What can be done to expand our potential pool of prospective students? UAA provides students access to an “Alaska lifestyle” potentially highly attractive to out of state or international students.
- Functions the university are obliged or mandated to perform must be performed. What might we aspire to do that could be held or delayed for later implementation?
- Establish and maintain necessary ratios for supervisory/administrative to operational personnel. Emphasis must be on program delivery over supervision of program delivery.

The current budget crisis forces us to opt between bad choices and worse choices. The difficulties of this are magnified by the accelerated time frame in which they must be done.

There is no good process for achieving Draconian cuts which must inevitably leave UAA diminished. That being said, a process which is deliberate in its pacing, equitable in its shared burdens, informed by data rather than merely driven by it, institutional in scope, focused on process improvements, and is open and transparent will have legitimacy which can command respect and acceptance. As more cuts can be expected for the 2021-2022 Academic Year we feel the process for making those cuts requires the following.

- Ideally, the process would begin with a thorough understanding of precisely what level of funding was necessary for the university to carry out the four functions listed above.
- Adequate time must be provided for acquiring and analyzing necessary data. Time for thorough reflection, commentary, feedback and revision is vital to a legitimate process.
- Burden sharing must be equitable (which is not the same as equal). Those suffering disproportionate burdens will inevitably feel resentful and alienated. Even more dangerous, however, is the sense of entitlement among those artificially spared such burdens.
- Make clear what proportion of cuts are coming from academic programs, administrative functions within academic units, and administrative functions within administrative units.
- A data informed process that looks beyond the individual silos of academic programs, colleges, or administrative units and focuses on the improvement of processes offers the possibility of realizing substantial savings and must be part of the planning process.
- Criteria for making cuts, once established, must be adhered to.
- An open, informed process, respectful of shared governance principles is vital for the process to retain legitimacy.

While the commitment to transparency is paramount, we are deeply concerned that the mere announcement that program and service cuts are contemplated will aggravate continuing trends of decline in student enrolments and tuition. The danger of slipping beyond the event horizon of a black hole in which declines in institutional reputation bring mutual declines in programs, enrollments, tuition, research funding, faculty, and staff which cannot be reversed is quite real and may, for all we know, already have been crossed.

The only viable path to avoid this fate are stable budgets which permit long term planning and leveraging resources for growth to proceed. Practices adopted must be sustainable over time to avoid the burn out of students, faculty, staff and administrators operating in constant crisis mode. And all of this must be in service to a shared vision of what UAA shall be once the crisis is passed and with a clearly articulated path to get there.

More than the mere promise of survival, what will inspire and sustain us is the assurance that there will be a future where we can once again dedicate ourselves to the task of making UAA the best institution it can be for the people of Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska.

Respectfully Submitted.

Campus Planning Advisory Board

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1. "How Working Class Life is Killing Americans: In Charts,"

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/06/opinion/working-class-death-rate.html>, accessed 3/9/20