

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

November 4, 2016

TO: Chancellor Case, UAA
Chancellor Caulfield, UAS
Chancellor Thomas, UAF

FROM: Jim Johnsen, President

SUBJECT: Single College of Education

Based on review of the Strategic Pathways report and input received from within and outside the university, including from you and your academic leaders, I have decided to recommend to the Board of Regents (BOR) that the University of Alaska establish a single College of Education with administrative direction from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. My rationale for the decision is as follows.

RATIONALE

The two forcing functions that are driving change at the university—(1) the severe decline in budget support from the State and (2) the compelling need to invest in high priority improvements and opportunities—are front and center as we decide how to organize and strengthen our preparation of Alaska’s teachers and education leaders.

As you recall, I shared with the BOR at its meeting in September my intention to recommend a single administrative unit for our education programs. There are several reasons for bringing our several schools of education together into a one College of Education. They include the need for:

- sharper focus on the state’s needs for more Alaska-prepared teachers and education leaders,
- greater accountability for meeting those needs,
- increased consistency in our numerous degree and endorsement programs,
- increased collaboration among our faculty,
- more support for innovation and expanded access,
- simplification of governance processes to enable increased nimbleness and responsiveness to changing needs,
- all with an eye to productivity and cost effectiveness.

UA’s strong record of success in improving nursing education by basing the programs at UAA with faculty delivering courses and programs to students on campuses across the state was a major factor in recommending a single administrative home for our education schools.

As I considered the difficult question of which university ought to be the administrative home for the College, I was most impressed by the strengths you articulated that each university brings to the opportunity.

UAA's large size, location in our largest city and transportation hub, relationships with local school districts, connection with the Institute for Social and Economic Research, and excellent faculty make it a strong option.

UAS's long record of innovative and high quality programs, its commitment to and passion for teacher and education leader preparation, and its strong record in preparing Alaska Native teachers all count in its favor.

UAF's strength in STEM fields, its relationships with a large number of rural school districts, its strong completion rates, its research success, and its high academic ranking as a Tier 1 research university all weigh in its favor.

At the end of the day, in light of the research literature finding that schools of education in high performing societies are best based at a research university, I am recommending that UAF serve as the administrative base for the College of Education. While UAF will be the administrative base, the College will only be successful by building on the existing creativity and commitment of the students, faculty, and programs currently being delivered by UAA, UAF, and UAS.

This approach to education was informed by UA's current approach to its nursing programs, where UAA was selected to be the administrative home with faculty and classes at campuses all across the state. Wherein nursing faculty located on the UAF and UAS campuses are UAA faculty, teacher education faculty at UAA and UAS would be UAF faculty under this new plan.

In light of the state's challenging fiscal climate and the imperative that UA to step up to meet Alaska's high priority needs, we must make choices, difficult choices such as this one.

All this, of course, requires approval by the regents.

BOARD OF REGENTS

Here is the motion I intend to present to the BOR for their consideration:

In support of meeting the University of Alaska's goals for increasing the production of high quality teachers and education leaders for Alaska, the Board of Regents directs the president to take the necessary steps, including seeking approval from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), to establish a single College of Education (College) for the University of Alaska.

The College will be administered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). College faculty will be located at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), reporting to UAF. The College will offer a full array of programs and services to education students system-wide and on-line through College faculty and staff located at the campuses.

Pursuant to this direction, the president will appoint a planning team chaired by the vice president of academic affairs and research and comprised of representatives selected from the following: education faculty from current education programs, the Faculty Alliance, the deans of education, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the National Education Association-Alaska, and the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

The plan will include provisions to:

- support student continuation and completion of degree programs,
- advise on a process to select the permanent Dean of the College,
- ensure coordination with programmatic (NCATE/CAEP) and institutional accreditation bodies (NWCCU),
- articulate faculty and staff responsibilities and transitional employment terms including tenure, consistent with the terms of applicable policy, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements,
- increase student enrollment and completion rates,
- ensure strong relationships between the College and key local, regional, and state stakeholders,
- ensure effective and inclusive governance of the College,
- provide for appropriate allocation of financial and other resources,
- include a timeline for key implementation milestones, and
- address any other matters required for effective implementation of this direction.

The plan will specify all necessary amendments to Regents' Policy and University Regulation and take full effect not later than July 1, 2018, subject to NWCCU approval.

The president will update the Academic and Student Affairs Committee at its meeting in February 2017 on the progress of the planning team and to the Full Board at its meeting on March 2-3, 2017.

NEXT STEPS

I would appreciate your sharing this communication with the faculty and staff in your education programs around the noon hour today. A media release will be distributed near the end of the day today. Please convey to your education faculty that the planning team will have strong faculty representation and will require multiple working groups comprised of faculty and staff from around the system.

Thank you for the strong support you consistently have expressed for UA and your commitment to work collaboratively in the interest of improving Alaska's educational system on behalf of our students and our state.