

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fairbanks – When the University of Alaska Board of Regents convenes next week, it will consider President Jim Johnsen’s recommendation that the University of Alaska establish a single College of Education (College) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks [UAF]. The selection of UAF to house the administrative functions of the education program is an outcome of Strategic Pathways review of the university’s delivery of teacher education. That review process—which included key internal and external stakeholders—identified several options, including a single college.

“Based on review of the Strategic Pathways report and input received from within and outside the university, I believe there are several reasons for bringing our three schools of education together into one College of Education,” Johnsen said, “most notably the need for a sharper focus on the state’s needs for more Alaska-prepared teachers and education leaders, and a greater accountability for meeting those needs.” Other key reasons include the importance of increasing consistency in the numerous degree and endorsement programs, supporting more faculty collaboration and innovation, and increasing productivity and cost effectiveness.

“Although UAF will serve as the administrative base, the College of Education will build on the existing creativity and commitment of the students, faculty, and programs currently being delivered by UAF, University of Alaska Anchorage [UAA], and the University of Alaska Southeast [UAS],” Johnsen said. “Classes and programs will continue to be offered on all three campuses by faculty at those locations.”

This plan for education was informed by UA’s current approach to the 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 campus are UAA faculty, teacher education faculty at UAA would be UAF faculty under this new plan.

If the recommendation is adopted by the regents, the plan would need to be approved by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, which separately accredits UAA, UAF and UAS.

“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 that each university brings to the opportunity,” Johnsen said. He cited UAA’s excellent faculty, strong relationships with local school districts, and urban location; UAS’s long record of innovative and high quality programs including its strong record in preparing Alaska Native teachers; and, UAF’s strength in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields, its relationships with a large number of rural school districts, its research success, and its high academic ranking as a Tier 1 research university. Since faculty will continue to deliver programs at current locations, all of the relationships developed with their students as well as local school districts will continue with little interruption.

Going forward, Johnsen said he will appoint a planning team to work out the details of the change chaired by the UA Vice President of Academic Affairs and Research Dan White and comprised of education faculty from each of the current programs, the Faculty Alliance, the deans of education, the Alaska Department of Early Education and 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 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
- address any other matters required for effective implementation of this direction.

Johnsen said he will come back to the regents this spring with the detailed plan, which he anticipates implementing, subject to accreditation approval, beginning before the end of the fiscal year. Full implementation would be targeted for completion in 2018.