Dear Colleagues:  

March 4, 2013

Over the past three years colleges and universities in the Lower 48 have been forced to deal with significant declines in state funding. Though we haven’t felt the same rapid decline in state dollars in Alaska, it is clear the impact of lower oil prices and the change in the world economies will have an effect on the University’s future funding from the state. UAA is in a unique position in that we—unlike those universities outside Alaska—have the opportunity to take a proactive role in planning for our financial future by actively engaging our faculty, staff and administrators in a process we lead ourselves.

In light of potential changes in UAA’s funding picture, and with the objective of becoming an even better institution, we are about to undertake a comprehensive effort to examine the way in which our resources are being invested at UAA. Our approach to this effort will be modeled on the process outlined in Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services by Robert C. Dickeson, a distinguished president emeritus and renowned higher education consultant. This model encourages a well, thought-out change management approach that recognizes the important role faculty, administration and staff have in shaping UAA’s future.

As a unified team, UAA will assess all of its academic programs and administrative support departments to determine how each contributes to the institution’s overall success in comparison to all other programs. This effort will be led by two task forces: one to examine academic programs and one to examine administrative support programs. The academic task force will be primarily comprised of faculty members, with some representation from administration; the administrative task force will be primarily comprised of staff and administrative managers, with some representation from faculty.

This process will involve a systematic and thoughtful analysis of how our current programs and services align with our mission and our Strategic Plan 2017, coupled with a strategic cost and demand analysis of our programs and services. Our assessment and evaluation criteria will be designed particularly for UAA, and will provide us with the tools necessary to complete a thorough analysis of our programs. By the end of this process, it will be clear to us which programs and services at UAA need additional investment through reallocation of funds.

The process will begin this spring with the formation of the academic and administrative task forces and the development of criteria and rubrics for data analysis and evaluation. In the fall we will proceed with the analysis of the programs. If you are interested in nominating yourself or a colleague for consideration for the academic programs task force, please contact Robert Boeckmann at 786-1783, or for consideration for the administrative programs task force, contact Sandi Culver at 786-1007. We need your nominations by April 4.

We will hold open forums for faculty and staff to learn more about the strategic prioritizing process between March 18 and March 29. We hope you will attend one of these informational sessions.
Below is our anticipated timeline for the strategic prioritization process:

- March-April, 2013: Assemble task forces, communicate to community, hold faculty and staff forums, develop criteria/rubric/weighting.

- May 13-15, 2013: Train Faculty and Administrative Task Forces, set up a Support Team to help the task forces with data retrieval, administrative support, etc.

- Summer-Fall, 2013: Task forces conduct training throughout UAA, preview templates for program review.

- Summer-Fall, 2013: Data gathering and assessment, test programs with respective templates, criteria and weighting, review programs and assign categories (examples might include: additional investment, maintain as is, transform, consolidate/merge, etc.).

- Spring 2014: Review findings, draft recommendations for presentation to Cabinet.

- Summer/Fall 2014: Implement changes.

Though UAA’s enrollment is flat and our projection for FY14 leaves us approximately $4-$5M short of funding our programs and services at the current level, it’s important to note that this process was not initiated with the sole intent of cutting budgets. Rather, a formal prioritization and strategic budgeting process will enable us to make better informed academic and administrative program funding decisions and will help us to allocate resources to the programs that best align with our mission.

In the coming years, UAA aims to further develop student achievement and attainment programs, to build stronger partnerships with Alaska’s schools and industries, to enhance our research and development programs and to contribute more fully to the state’s economy. By strategically prioritizing UAA’s academic programs and services, our institution will continue to prosper, even in the face of financial uncertainty.

Sincerely,

Robert Boeckmann, Ph.D., Faculty Senate President

Tom Case, Chancellor