

FAQ: Possible Impacts of Budget Cuts/Re-Structuring of UA

Will my degree be viable (accredited)?

Yes. The ABET-accredited programs at UAA are all current in their accreditation, so any degrees earned in AY2019-20 will be accredited degrees from a regionally accredited university. We are committed to working with ABET to insure that accredited engineering degrees persist in some form in Alaska, although we are unsure at this point exactly what that will look like.

What happens to students who are close to being done with their degree if the University's accreditation status changes?

We don't yet know exactly how that will work, but we are working with our accrediting bodies to determine how to best serve these students.

Will I be able to complete my degree at UAA?

That depends. The short answer is that things become more uncertain the more semesters you have left to complete your degree. If you are in a position to finish your degree in either December 2019 or May 2020, you might consider working hard to make sure that happens. We anticipate being able to offer a more or less regular schedule of classes (with some exceptions: low enrollment courses are subject to cancellation) during the coming academic year, fall and spring. After this year, it becomes less certain, although we anticipate a majority of our students will be able to complete their degrees from courses offered in Anchorage or offered via distance from Fairbanks, but it may require academic petitions if there are changes to respective degree programs.

Will the UAF and UAA engineering programs be combined, and if so what would that look like?

All we know for certain at this point is that the UA Board of Regents has asked that a plan be developed for the UAA College of Engineering and the UAF College of Engineering and Mines to be consolidated into a single administrative unit. We don't yet know exactly how that will look, although it would likely involve reductions in faculty and staff.

Is the Engineering department at UAA expected to lose positions? If so, what kind of positions will be cut?

Yes, UAA CoEng will almost certainly lose positions. If funding is not restored by the Governor, both staff and faculty positions will be cut. We're not yet sure which ones.

Will upper-level elective courses and graduate courses continue to be offered?

Yes, but under the condition of financial exigency under which we are now operating, we cannot afford to offer under-enrolled classes, and the classes most likely to be under-enrolled are the upper-level and graduate classes. We might have to cancel an elective or graduate class that might have been your first choice, and you might have to take another class that is offered to finish your degree.

What classes will be cut?

Classes with fewer than 10 students are going to be examined closely and might be cut. Classes with fewer than 5 students are likely going to be cut (this does not apply if you are a graduate student taking a thesis or project class with an advisor, or if you're engaged in independent or directed studies).

Do you anticipate some graduate courses being taught at only one campus? If so, will there be an option take those courses online?

It is very likely that moving forward, many graduate and elective classes might be offered in a hybrid online/face-to-face format on one campus or the other. One advantage of a merged College of Engineering is the potential to offer graduate programs in Anchorage that are currently available only in Fairbanks.

Rumor has it that the College of Engineering has been prioritized and as such will not be majorly affected by the budget cuts. Is there truth to this claim?

The College of Engineering will still be affected by the budget cuts. In a hypothetical scenario presented to the Board of Regents, the merged College of Engineering was cut by 32%.

Should I transfer?

There is no blanket answer to this question that is right for everyone. For students who are planning to graduate this year (December 2019 or May 2020), the answer is almost certainly “no, stay and complete your degree.” For students who are another year out, we unfortunately do not know what form or structure the college will have going into AY2020-21, although it’s highly probable that enough classes will be offered in the state for you to finish. Although it’s not certain, we anticipate a majority of our engineering programs will continue to be offered in Alaska and available in Anchorage. Certainly there are students for whom transfer might be a viable or even a good option. You really need to consider your individual circumstances, goals, restrictions, etc., and speak to an advisor as soon as you can.

How will a single accreditation affect (a) the selection of courses within engineering disciplines, (b) how we access courses (live, digital, etc), and (c) depth of offerings in regard to Master's and PhD opportunities?

That’s a really excellent question for which we do not have an answer at this time.

Do the funding cuts mean fewer scholarships offered to College of Engineering Students?

Private scholarships, such as those available through the UA Foundation, professional societies, etc., will not be affected by the state’s budget cuts. However, the college will have to cut back on the number of graduate and undergraduate lab TAs, and undergraduate graders that it is able to hire, on which some students rely for support.

If financial support for College of Engineering students has been affected by the recent budget cuts, through university scholarships or other scholarship entities, are emergency tuition waivers available to students for this academic year?

Some administrative scholarships may be available. You are encouraged to complete a FAFSA to ensure that you are eligible for financial aid.

Will buildings close as a result of the budget cuts? If so, which ones?

Almost certainly, yes. UAA is moving out of the University Center, for one thing. Selling, leasing, or shuttering some buildings is on the table. Currently no one is talking about closing either of the engineering buildings.

When will we have answers to some of our questions that remain unanswerable at this time?

There are three important pieces to these decisions, and they are interrelated:

- 1) On August 13, 2019, Gov. Dunleavy and John Davies, Chair of the UA Board of Regents, signed an agreement which states that the Governor will be cutting State funding of the UA budget by a total \$70 million over the next 3 years (\$25/\$25/\$20 million). While this is obviously a smaller cut than the \$136 million the Governor originally put forth, it still represents a significant reduction in State funding to the University.
- 2) UA statewide administration, under President Jim Johnsen, is continuing to develop a plan to consolidate/restructure UAA, UAF and UAS into a singly-accredited “new UA” based on the reduced funding.
- 3) President Johnsen’s plan for implementation of a “new UA” will be voted on by the UA Board of Regents at their meeting on September 12-13, 2019. Whatever comes out of that meeting will be the basis on which the University will move forward.