Academic Affairs
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Office of Academic Affairs Faculty Senate Report

Each month, the Office of the Provost is pleased to provide a summary of our ongoing work, with highlights of accomplishments, notice of forthcoming efforts and events, and reminders about key processes, dates, and deadlines. Please make time to read these notices; if you miss one, or need to refer back, you can find all of our reports along with a variety of other information and messages at the UAA Provost Communications website.

Office of the Provost

Systemwide Attainment Framework

The UA Board of Regents' Systemwide Attainment Framework is continuing to drive improvements and investments at UAA supporting recruitment, retention and graduation.

Both UAA Faculty and Staff play key roles in achieving the SAF goals.

For example, on the recruitment side, faculty are actively involved in work with the Middle Colleges, ANSEP Acceleration, and other dual enrollment programs, including giving special presentations that highlight the unique strengths of UAA academic programs, a key component of conversion to enrolled, degree-seeking status. Numerous UAA faculty also work with the recruitment and admissions staff to ensure the academic program information shared with prospective students is accurate and compelling. Others participate in recruiting events, Howl Days, (yield events) and more, all in coordination with the admissions team as we work to recruit new students to UAA.

On the retention side, faculty have been vital in scaling efforts to support students through curricular reforms (such as eliminating hidden pre-requisites) and pedagogic reforms (such as embedding an LA into a high D-F-W course). Many UAA faculty are working closely with professional advisors to ensure students can complete their degrees with minimal barriers.

In part because UAA faculty and staff have been so deeply committed to “Putting Students First,” it can feel like the SAF is a new effort that should require substantial new involvement. Some faculty may look at the documents and think “what role do I play in this?” In reality, *the ongoing work of UAA faculty matters deeply* and significantly impacts these efforts.

One benefit of SAF is that it shines a brighter spotlight on the great work we’ve already done, provides us better opportunities to scale up successful pilots and initiatives, and allows us to continue to align our policies and practices with those that have been shown to improve student outcomes nationally. *I’m so grateful* for all the faculty and staff who have put so much of themselves into this work, and I’m proud to share your stories on behalf of UAA.

Dig deeper: be sure to check out the Metrics and Targets set by the Board of Regents, and follow our progress through the Quarterly Updates.

Please direct questions or comments to the Provost (uaa_provost@alaska.edu)

Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness

Academic Affairs

TOEFL Scoring System Changes - Starting in January 2026, ETS changed the TOEFL scoring system to better align with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). To comply with this change, Enrollment Services calculated the equivalent of the currently approved scores and posted them on the English Proficiency Testing website. These changes will be published in the AY2026-2027 Academic Catalog. As a reminder, changes to the minimum scores for admission to UAA would go through the appropriate boards, Faculty Senate, and the provost.

Scheduling and Curriculum Deadlines - As conveyed by the provost in messaging to the deans and to the faculty, the new State of Alaska textbook affordability law, in conjunction with a change in when registration goes live, requires a shift in deadlines for curriculum, scheduling, and course materials adoptions. See the projected timelines, now posted on the Registrar’s scheduling page. Scroll down to see what it will look like starting with the Spring 2027 schedule. (Although the curriculum deadline for the Sp27 schedule states the December Faculty Senate meeting, please know our offices are working to get courses that are on the February agenda through.) Please note that if you are trying to access this site from off campus, you will need to be logged into the VPN. Bookstore adoption deadlines for the upcoming Summer 2026 and Fall 2026 semesters are included in this message from the provost.

Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional Effectiveness

Wrapping up UAA 2027 (Thursday, May 7, 9:00-12:00) - In place of our annual assessment retreat, we will hold a universitywide, all campus conversation about UAA 2027. How well have we met the goals and objectives of UAA 2027? What are you most proud of? Bring your examples! This conversation will contribute to the written wrap up of UAA 2027 and will set the stage to kick off the next strategic planning process in fall 2026.

Please direct any questions to Senior Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness Susan Kalina (smkalina@alaska.edu)

Student Success Report

Through the SEM Committee, UAA awarded over $95,000 in microgrants to clear Fall financial holds for 69 students (Freshman, Sophomores, and a few Juniors) who had holds between $500 and $2000. Of these 42 (61%) have enrolled for the spring semester and remain in classes after Add/Drop. By refining our process we saw a 20% improvement on the return rate.

Peer Advising launched in the middle of last semester. We currently have 3 peer advisors assisting students. Their caseloads are primarily first-year students in AA general program or Exploratory. The Peer Advisors are also beginning to provide on-site support to students in the Indigenous and Rural Student Center along with several tutors in Writing, Math, Academic Coaching, and Yupik hired by the Learning Commons.

The Title III SAGE grant program has a record number of high DFW courses with LA support this semester with 39 sections providing peer support!

Seawolf Debate is hosting its 18th annual Cabin Fever Debate series. The Cabin Fever Debates are an intramural debate tournament for students who have never competed for UAA in intercollegiate debate competitions. This allows the Seawolf Debate team members to serve as coaches and judges. This is a fantastic opportunity for students to stand up and engage with their peers on important issues. The championships will be on February 17th from 7-9:30pm in SSB 118.

Mark your calendars for the Annual Student Research & Creative Activity Showcase on April 17th. It will be held from 9am-1pm in the Spine (Creek Bridge). The submissions portal will open in March.

Please direct any questions to Vice Provost of Student Success Ray Ball (rball11@alaska.edu)

Faculty Success Report

UAA reaffirms its distinguished status as Alaska's only Carnegie Designated Community-Engaged University! This designation recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an exceptional, institution-wide commitment to community engagement through reciprocal partnerships, integrated systems, and sustained public impact.

Thank you to UAA faculty, staff, students, and administration - this reclassification would not have been possible without your amazing community-engaged work, and your willingness to share it with the Center for Community Engagement and Learning (CCEL). To receive reclassification, institutions must document not only activities and outputs, but the systems, cultures, and infrastructure that sustain high-quality community engagement over time. We extend our sincere gratitude to all who contributed examples, data, narratives, and insight to the self-study process. We offer particular thanks to those of you who responded to our Fall 2024 survey, provided insights into your units' work, and to the CCEL leadership team, Sara Buckingham and Ruby Fried, that guided this effort.

This year CAFE's Winter Teaching Academy (WTA) was dedicated towards Blackboard Ultra course conversions, with Instructional Design hosting numerous sessions throughout the day. Over 80 faculty participated, converting at least one course shell. As of this semester 62.5% of courses offered in Blackboard are being taught in Ultra, a 15.3% increase from last semester. Just a reminder that all courses must be converted for Fall 2026.

There are multiple options to get quick information, or more hands-on help with Ultra, which you can find below.

Self-paced assistance:

- Teaching in Blackboard one-page guide
- How to keep Original (video)

- How to try Ultra (video)
- Self-enroll in the UAA Blackboard Ultra Faculty Community
- UAA Blackboard Ultra page
- Watch a course walkthrough on our Ultra at UAA playlist for students.
- Practice in an Ultra sandbox shell (email uaa_design@alaska.edu to get a shell)

Hands-on help:

- Register for a one-week asynchronous training in UAA Blackboard Ultra Course Conversion
- Schedule an appointment with an Instructional Designer
- Email our Instructional Design team at uaa_design@alaska.edu

The Faculty Success offices can be reached here. Please direct questions to Vice Provost Colin McGill (cmmcgill@alaska.edu).