

## University of Alaska Anchorage

### Guidance for Academic Decisions in a Climate of Declining Budgets, AY2016-17

#### A. Preamble

*The purpose of this document is to provide UAA decision makers with a coherent rationale for making the difficult resource decisions required during a time of decreased funding. These decisions must be driven by UAA's academic mission and by the need to continually invest in strategic initiatives. These academic decisions will determine shifts in support and service areas.*

*This is not a strategic plan or a policy statement. This document provides focused criteria to be implemented at the Provost level and below, and, as such, is written broadly enough to apply across UAA but specific enough to be operationalized at the appropriate unit level. While declining revenues challenge the UAA, these demands allow all university members to identify strategic priorities based upon these criteria and our mission, vision, and values.*

#### B. Background

##### 1. Motivation, Authority, & Process

In response to increasing budget challenges, Provost Gingerich asked the deans to consider what the academic core of the University would look like after five years of budget reductions. Recognizing that the deans would be primarily responsible for leading the colleges through these fiscally challenging times, the Provost asked that they do so with a coordinated vision. As a result, the deans reviewed ongoing UAA efforts and initiatives, the mission and vision statements of UAA and the various colleges, and included the community campus directors and faculty senate leadership in the conversation. The discussion will be expanded in early Fall 2015 to include the greater campus community. This Strategic Guidance document distills the essence of those conversations into usable criteria. It is essential to note that decisions will be made one way or another. This document provides a robust, shared set of criteria for making those difficult decisions.

##### 2. External Analysis

This Strategic Guidance document incorporates national trends in higher education, considers revenue projections for Alaska, and studies local and regional workforce demands, all while recognizing UAA's place in cultural and economic landscape of Southcentral Alaska.

##### 3. Internal Analysis

UAA is currently guided by the UAA 2017 Strategic Plan as well as by a system-wide effort, *Shaping Alaska's Future*. To guide UAA, a set of Core Themes were established in 2012 and reaffirmed by the Chancellor's Cabinet in Feb. 2015, and these have shaped the analysis.

##### 4. Program Prioritization

Program Prioritization can be considered a self-study which analyzed how well internal units and programs aligned to the UAA mission. The current guidance (informed by Prioritization) identifies additional criteria for UAA decision makers who are faced with the allocation of reduced resources. These criteria, while generalized and shared, will be operationalized and strategically implemented at the college level. Since Program Prioritization, Alaska's fiscal climate has changed drastically, and this

document identifies more narrowly-focused program and emphasis areas within the UAA mission in light of other institutional documentation.

#### 5. Institutional Alignment

This Strategic Guidance document is not designed to replace the UAA 2017 Strategic Plan, and the recommendations here are aligned with the UAA mission, operational goals, core themes, institutional priorities, and ongoing institutional efforts.

#### 6. Guiding Assumptions

The strength of UAA is in its diverse people – its students, faculty, and staff – and in its open enrollment mandate. UAA must continually promote its faculty and staff as the intellectual capital of the state, increase its profile across the state, articulate its mission to stakeholders, and communicate the vital importance of higher education to the state’s economic health and cultural vitality. However, given the current state fiscal climate, the UA system will continue to face diminished state revenue and will need to continue to advocate for its position among state agencies. Student enrollment will continue to decline and perhaps plateau, but Alaskans will continue to pursue higher education at current rates. Despite decreases in state appropriations, UAA will continue to be a vibrant and thriving university that serves the peoples of Alaska. UAA will maintain a strong academic core and explore areas of growth and opportunity that will help meet Alaska's changing needs. UAA will continue to be an essential part of Alaska's future.

#### 7. Consultation

The current version of this document reflects feedback from the colleges and community campuses across the UAA community, conducted by Dr. Bart Quimby, at the request of the Provost, in Fall 2015.

#### 8. Implementation Strategy

It is expected that the criteria articulated in this guidance document will be operationalized at the Provost, college dean, and community campus director level following current shared governance principles.

### C. MISSION / VISION / VALUES

*The mission of the University of Alaska Anchorage is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement, and creative expression. Located in Anchorage and on community campuses in Southcentral Alaska, UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities, and its diverse peoples. The University of Alaska Anchorage is an open access university with academic programs leading to occupational endorsements; undergraduate and graduate certificates; and associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees in a rich, diverse, and inclusive environment.*

To implement this mission, the University of Alaska Anchorage:

#### 1. Prepares students to be:

- Proficient in 21st century skills (literacy, numeracy, collaboration, problem solving/critical thinking, cultural competence),
- Employees with the technical and employability skills needed by Alaskan industries,
- Professionals ready for entrepreneurship, employment, licensure, advancement and leadership in Alaskan business, industry, non-profit, and governmental agencies in Alaska, and

- Educated, active, and engaged civic-minded community members.
2. Strengthens the institution to be a:
    - Center for teaching, research, scholarship, and creative activity,
    - Cultural hub of Southcentral Alaska and the state,
    - Leader in Alaska’s developing role in the Arctic and North Pacific, and
    - Leader to support the work of the state.

#### **D. INSTITUTIONAL CORE THEMES**

To guide resource allocations, UAA will use the Institutional Core Themes, Objectives, and Indicators, which are themselves aligned with the UAA mission and institutional priorities:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity
3. Student Success
4. UAA Community
5. Public Square

Details of the Core Themes, Objectives, and Indicators are listed in the Appendix below.

#### **E. INSTITUTIONAL FOCUS AREAS**

In order to achieve its mission, UAA should focus resources on the following priorities:

- Program Areas – Supporting
  - Health Sciences
  - Professional Programs
  - Career & Technical Education
  - Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Emphasis Areas – Addressing
  - Our Distinct Surroundings:  
Arctic Issues & Northern Opportunities
  - Our Unique Context:  
Alaska Native Indigenous Peoples
  - Our Fiscal Challenges:  
Sustainable Communities, Environments, & Economies
  - Our Geographic Position:  
A Local, State, Regional, National, and International Crossroads

All decisions must consider:

- Mission Alignment
- Student Demand
- State Priorities

Additionally, as appropriate for their unit, decision makers must also consider resource allocations that:

- Serve Alaska’s diverse and under-served populations,
- Provide access to higher education,
- Consider the direct effect on student experience,
- Support certificate or degree programs,
- Produce research, scholarship, and/or creative work,

- Attract internal and external partners that enhance program offerings and student learning, and
- Develop active, engaged, and well-rounded civic-minded community members prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **F. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

This document is designed to provide a shared set of general criteria while leaving the strategic implementation and operationalizing of the criteria to UAA decision makers at the appropriate unit level. Realizing that tough decisions will soon be made with or without guidance, it is anticipated that Community Campus Directors, Academic Deans, and other UAA decision makers will align their decisions with the principles articulated in this document. The key is that UAA decision makers remain informed, agile, and proactive in adapting to a changing fiscal environment while maintaining the core UAA mission in light of these criteria.

## **G. ANNUAL REVIEW**

Because rapid change is occurring across so wide a scope, it is also recommended that this document be reviewed annually, starting in Spring 2016.

## Appendix: Detailed Core Themes, Objectives, and Indicators

1. Teaching and Learning
  - UAA Student Learning Outcomes are achieved
    - Student achievement of course and program student learning outcomes
  - UAA academic programs meet state needs
    - Total degrees and certificates awarded with emphasis on high-demand jobs
    - Total student credit hours
2. Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity
  - UAA research, scholarship, and creative activities advance knowledge
    - Number and dollar amounts of proposals submitted and awarded grants, contracts, and sponsored activities in research, scholarship, and creative activities
    - National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) Research Expenditures
3. Student Success
  - UAA students access and successfully transition into the university
    - The degree to which UAA's students reflect Alaska's racial and ethnic diversity
    - First-to second-year first-time, full-time undergraduate student retention rate
  - UAA students persist and achieve their goals
    - Successful Learning Rate: Proportion of courses successfully completed out of total courses attempted by student sub- cohorts grouped by first year of entry
    - Total degrees and certificates awarded with emphasis on high-demand jobs
    - Graduation rates
    - Graduates' employment rates and average earnings
4. UAA Community
  - UAA's environments support and sustain learning, working, and living
    - The degree to which UAA's faculty and staff reflect Alaska's racial and ethnic diversity
    - The degree to which faculty, staff, and students express satisfaction with their professional and learning environments
    - Development and management of a sustainable budget as demonstrated by nationally accepted financial ratios
    - Number of crimes, incidents, and injuries reported
5. Public Square
  - UAA engages in mutually beneficial partnerships with the communities we serve
    - The degree to which a partnership portfolio demonstrates diverse partnerships across public-private sectors, agencies and communities.
    - Number of UAA colleges which have developed engagement guidelines for faculty promotion and tenure
    - Public presentations, workshops, other ways in which scholarship is disseminated