

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

**A Pilot Year Three
Evaluation Committee Report**

**University of Alaska-Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska**

September 30-October 2, 2009

*A Confidential Report Prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
That Represents the Views of the Evaluation Committee*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	
Institutional Context	page 1
Preface	page 2
Brief Update on Institutional Changes	
Chapter One—Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations	page 3
Section I:	page 3
a. Mission Statement	
b. Mission Core Themes	
c. Definition of Fulfillment of Mission, and Within that Definition, Interpretation of Acceptable Threshold of Mission Fulfillment	
d. Date and Manner of Most Recent Review of Mission and Core Themes	
Section II: Core Themes	page 5
a. Descriptive Title	
b. Core Theme Objectives	
c. Indicators of Achievement of the Core Theme Objectives	
d. Rationale as to Why the Indicators are Assessable and Meaningful Measures of Achievement of Core Theme Objectives	
Section III: Chapter Summary	page 6
Chapter Two—Standard Two: Resources and Capacity	page 7
Section I: 2.A Governance	page 7
Section II: 2.B Human Resources	page 9
Section III: 2.C Education Resources	page 11
Section IV: 2.D Student Support	page 14
Section V: 2.E Library and Information Resources	page 18
Section VI: 2.F Financial Resources	page 20
Section VII: 2.G Physical and Tech. Infrastructure	page 22
Section VIII: Chapter Summary	page 23
Report Summary: Commendations and Recommendations	page 24
Appendixes	

INTRODUCTION

The visit and work of this Evaluation Committee and the University of Anchorage Alaska were carried out in a spirit of serious experimentation. This was the first site visit and evaluation in the context of the new and still-changing revised Standards of the NWCCU. In a significantly shortened time-frame the University of Alaska Anchorage prepared for the Pilot Three Year evaluation. The Evaluation Committee also needed to be oriented to the new process and operative Standards (Draft 4.0), which it did through conference calls during the summer as well as its initial Committee meeting in Anchorage prior to starting the actual visit and discussions with UAA. Despite the newness of the process and the still evolving Standards, the Evaluation Committee felt at the conclusion of the visit that the process had been a good one and that it had gathered ample information and impressions about the University of Alaska Anchorage in the context of these new Standards and the visit's focus in order to develop what it hopes will be a useful document and insights; useful both to the University and to the Commission.

The Evaluation Committee received in advance of the visit a number of documents from the University and the Commission that helped it prepare for the visit. Among them were: Draft 4.0 of the Revised Standards (the version agreed upon by UAA and NWCCU for this evaluation); the UAA Self Study prepared for this evaluation visit; copies of a number of NWCCU evaluation reports going back to and including the 2000 Full Scale Evaluation Report; copies of substantial change correspondence between UAA and NWCCU; UAA's current catalogue; and diverse additional reports, brochures, etc. All of these were helpful to the Committee as it gathered information on the University prior to its visit. The Evaluation Committee chair had extensive correspondence with the UAA Provost's Office and the full and generous cooperation of the latter in setting up the visit and its diverse schedule. That schedule is included in this report as Appendix 2.

The Committee members found the Self-Study to be very useful to its orientation and deliberations, although, of necessity, given the extremely dynamic nature of this sped-up process, several advances had occurred in the month's time between completion of the Self-Study and the arrival of the Evaluation Committee. Although the Committee concluded that a handful of important issues facing the University had not been dealt with adequately or critically in the Self-Study document (these are discussed in some detail later in this Report and raised in the "Recommendation" portion at the conclusion of the Report), it felt that the Self-Study certainly did an adequate job of describing, discussing, and analyzing most of the important issues, processes, strengths, and challenges it faced and faces in addressing the Standards that are the focus of this evaluation and in its efforts to move wisely, responsively, and strategically into the dynamic future.

Finally, the Evaluation Committee was shown not only gracious hospitality and given every possible assistance by UAA before and during the visit, it was provided the opportunity to meet with a very wide range of campus groups, leaders,

individuals, the community college directors, external constituents, and members of the Board of Regents. The Committee Chair also spent half of a day visiting at and with administrators, faculty, staff, and students at Kenai Peninsula College (one of UAA's "community" colleges outside of Anchorage). The Committee especially wants to note and thank the staff of the Provost's Office for its exceptional good work in arranging for a successful evaluation visit.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The University of Alaska Anchorage underwent its most recent full-scale NWCCU institutional evaluation in October, 2000, which was followed by Focused Interim evaluations in 2002, 2003, 2004; a regular Interim evaluation in 2005; and the acceptance of a Year One Report (new standards) in 2009. Along the way there were also numerous substantive change and progress reports that were submitted and accepted. One apparent reason for all of this activity was that the University of Alaska Anchorage experienced over the past ten years many changes, largely in terms of program additions and expansions, both on the main campus in Anchorage and on the community campuses in other locations. The mergers of the community campuses into UAA have also presented some ongoing challenges, as well as new opportunities, since those mergers were initiated.

Within the past year, however, the major changes were due to the rapid increase in enrollment (discussed below). UAA is the largest institution of higher education in Alaska, even though it does not offer the broad array of graduate programs of UA Fairbanks, nor is it currently allowed by the University of Alaska System to offer doctoral programs on its own. It is obvious that its growth has much to do with its location in the major population center of the State, as well as the demands and expectations placed on it at the two-year and lower-division level as UAA has sought to respond to occupational needs in the region and the state as a whole. The latter is true both on the Anchorage campus and at the community campuses. Even though the head count enrollment increased by only 5.5% between 1998 and 2008, this last year has seen a substantial increase, an increase that has caused stresses and strains as the university has attempted to address expanding needs from the employment sector as well as what must be regarded as a genuine enrollment spike, all of this without a commensurate addition of faculty and other resources to deal with the changes, with the exception perhaps of a couple of program areas (engineering and nursing).

Two additional features of UAA that deserve mention in this context are that (a) the university has a very broad mission that makes it responsible for serving students from the pre-collegiate GED level through the Masters' level, making it the equivalent of "vocational college," "community college," and comprehensive university all in one; and (b) the majority of its (headcount) students are part-time (although the number of full-time students appears to be increasing rapidly as well), again underscoring both the economically-responsive nature of a significant portion of its curriculum and the non-residential nature of its several campuses. With that said, however, it is also worth mentioning that at the other end of the university's

curriculum, a large number of graduate programs, especially those that are professionally oriented, can boast robust and growing enrollments as well. There also appears to be healthy growth in the number of traditional-age students who are enrolling in many baccalaureate degree programs.

PREFACE: BRIEF UPDATE ON INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

This pilot evaluation cycle, adopted voluntarily by UAA, has also led to the university's focus on formally adopting and articulating its Core Themes and developing processes to alter and improve its assessment strategies in order to better determine how well it is achieving its goals. In responding in relevant ways to the most recent NWCCU recommendations (letter from NWCCU to Chancellor Ulmer, March 19, 2008), UAA has subsequently strived to (a) simplify its Objective-Outcome-Indicator structure; (b) focused its attention on seeking and using as much *direct* evidence of achievement as possible; and (c) begun the process of determining acceptable levels of achievement that can be assessed in the first round of collection and analysis of data and evidence. The extent to which the Evaluation Committee felt after its analysis of these efforts that further work still needs to be done is discussed in the appropriate section below.

Again, it is perhaps worth repeating here, and to underscore some of the conclusions of the Evaluation Committee discussed below, that in the past year, all units of the University of Alaska Anchorage have experienced significant enrollment growth. Yet, this most recent growth has confronted UAA, as similar growth has confronted numerous other institutions during the past year, without adequate warning and without any real increase in resources. This challenge and task will require additional planning and effort rather quickly.

**CHAPTER ONE—STANDARD ONE: MISSION, CORE THEMES, AND
EXPECTATIONS**

SECTION I: STANDARD 1.A. --MISSION

a. Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the University of Alaska Anchorage is clearly aligned with the short and concise mission of the UA System, but it specifies the broad nature of its mission by stating that UAA is “an open access university” with academic programs that lead to occupational endorsements, certificates of various kinds and at various levels, and to associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees. Discussions on the Anchorage campus and with representatives of the community campuses indicated that there was widespread understanding and buy-in on the part of all constituents (administrators, faculty, staff, and external bodies) with the UAA Mission Statement and the Core Themes. However, the Evaluation Committee did hear from several individuals and groups during the visit that the sheer breadth of the mission, coupled with such challenges as the physical distance between the several campuses of UAA, causes a number of strains and inefficiencies, and, sometimes, a perceived lack of understanding of the differing sub-missions of the individual units of the University. The Evaluation Committee also heard that some confusion reigns about just who sets the role and scope of the UAA mission and how parts of the current role and scope might be re-negotiated. These comments focused primarily on the questions of additional programs, especially at the graduate level, including the possibility of adding Ph.D. and professional doctoral programs, and support for the research portion of UAA’s mission.

b. Mission Core Themes

The Core Themes that have recently been developed and articulated by the University of Alaska Anchorage are in keeping both with the UA System’s Regents’ Strategic Plan, UA 2009, and with the UAA’s own Strategic Plan 2017; they also align with the goals of other UAA planning processes that have set the stage for the institution’s approaches to the next several years. One example is the process that developed the UAA’s eleven Values. The Evaluation Committee heard from many individuals that these five Core Themes grew naturally out of discussions underway since 2006 about Five Strategic Priorities. Three of these five Core Themes respond, although they appear at first glance to be rather generic in nature, to the university’s mission of engaging with as much excellence as can be mustered in (a) teaching and learning, (b) research, and (c) providing optimal student success. The final two Core themes grow out of UAA’s special and very appropriate emphasis on building and sustaining community both (a) on the campuses of UAA and (b) in the “public square” (the term it uses to describe its activities and goals with regard to the off-campus community and public. The Evaluation Committee found that these

five Core Themes, as articulated thus far, make excellent sense for this university at this time. They appear to be well understood by all relevant university constituents.

c. Definition of Fulfillment of Mission, and Within that Definition, Interpretation of Acceptable Threshold of Mission Fulfillment

The Core Themes are described clearly and convincingly in Section II (Core Themes, Objectives, Outcomes, and Indicators) of Chapter One of the UAA Self Study, 13-28). Even though each of the Core Themes is handled in a separate part of this Section, the discussion of the overlapping nature of these themes that precedes the discussion of each is very helpful in understanding how they relate to and enhance one another. What appears to suggest that further work on the Core Themes is required is the fact that many of the Indicators of “Mission” and “Objective” fulfillment remain almost exclusively quantitative, focusing as they do rather often solely on “numbers” and “percentages.” For instance, the “institutional indicators” for Objective #1 (Quality course and program design) in Core Theme #1: Teaching and Learning, are limited to “percent of courses judged acceptable through a peer review process in the past 10 years” and “number of programs that hold separate accreditation from a recognized external organization.” Questions about what criteria have been applied over time in that process or about how well previously approved courses have remained “acceptable” according to such criteria are not addressed.

The Core Themes are described clearly and convincingly in Section II (Core Themes, Objectives, Outcomes, and Indicators) of Chapter One of the UAA Self Study, 13-28). Even though each of the Core Themes is handled in a separate part of this Section, the discussion of the overlapping nature of these themes that precedes the discussion of each is very helpful in understanding how they relate to and enhance one another. What appears to suggest that further work on the Core Themes is required is the fact that many of the Indicators of “Mission” and “Objective” fulfillment remain almost exclusively quantitative, focusing as they do rather often solely on “numbers” and “percentages.” For instance, the “institutional indicators” for Objective #1 (Quality course and program design) in Core Theme #1: Teaching and Learning, are limited to “percent of courses judged acceptable through a peer review process in the past 10 years” and “number of programs that hold separate accreditation from a recognized external organization.” Questions about what criteria have been applied over time in that process or about how well previously approved courses have remained “acceptable” according to such criteria are not addressed.

Another relevant example can be found in Objective #3 (Effective Teaching) in the same Core Theme, where the institutional indicators are likewise solely quantitative, and don’t appear likely to shed sufficient light on how “effective” teaching across the board really is. The cited indicators are: “percentage of faculty...who meet standards for their disciplines;” “percentage of faculty who are recognized for teaching effectiveness through an established peer review process;”

and “number and percentage of programs taking actions based on recommendations from assessments of student learning.”

All such indicators are plausible first steps, but in the opinion of the Evaluation Committee they don’t go far enough, aren’t detailed enough, and generally lack processes and results that will yield genuine evidence of how effective the teaching is, evidence that could then be used, for example, to suggest areas of teaching and curriculum that need improvement (for individual faculty, programs, and across the board) as well as strategies for achieving that improvement. These are simply examples of what the Evaluation Committee found to be aspects of the definition and interpretation of “acceptable threshold of mission fulfillment” that would benefit from additional attention and work. Similar concern was evident for the other Core Themes and the “institutional indicators” cited for them.

d. Date and Manner of Most Recent Review of Mission and Core Themes

d. Date and Manner of Most Recent Review of Mission and Core Themes

The review of the Mission and, especially of the Core Themes, is vigorous and ongoing, especially as the review process involves developing more sophisticated and useful ways of assessing the various ways in which the goals associated with these Core Themes are being fulfilled. The process for this continuous review and enhancement is one that utilizes both standing efforts (standing committees and regular processes) at UAA for strategic planning as well as new efforts and methods that have been created specifically for making improvements with regard to the Core Themes themselves and their assessment. The Evaluation Committee heard over and over again how open and all-inclusive these processes have been, involving a broad range of University constituents both on the campuses and off. Even with regard to the recommendation about a perceived inadequacy of the “institutional indicators” stated in the Self Study, the Evaluation Committee was pleased to hear that efforts are underway to address that concern.

The review of the Mission and, especially of the Core Themes, is vigorous and ongoing, especially as the review process involves developing more sophisticated and useful ways of assessing the various ways in which the goals associated with these Core Themes are being fulfilled. The process for this continuous review and enhancement is one that utilizes both standing efforts (standing committees and regular processes) at UAA for strategic planning as well as new efforts and methods that have been created specifically for making improvements with regard to the Core Themes themselves and their assessment. The Evaluation Committee heard over and over again how open and all-inclusive these processes have been, involving a broad range of University constituents both on the campuses and off. Even with regard to the recommendation about a perceived inadequacy of the “institutional indicators” stated in the Self Study, the Evaluation Committee was pleased to hear that efforts are underway to address that concern.

SECTION II: STANDARD 1.B-- CORE THEMES

a. Descriptive Title

The Five Core Themes selected by the University of Alaska Anchorage are, as suggested above, rather generic in part, at least in their separate titles (“Teaching and Learning,” “Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities,” etc.), but once explained more fully in the Self Study, they all make very good sense for the university and are much more specific and nuanced than their generic titles suggest. They are well-understood by all UAA constituents, and all constituencies expressed confidence in them and in the processes in which they participated actively to select and then articulate them. This is not to say, however, that the Evaluation Committee heard no concerns from administrators, faculty, staff, and students about just how the UAA should or is currently capable of pursuing all of these themes in adequately supported and sustainable ways. But the general attitude of these constituents about the potential for achieving the goals attached to these Core Themes was very positive.

b. Core Theme Objectives

The “Core Theme Objectives” that are described in the Self Study generally make good sense; but here, too, they are sometimes stated in language that is not specific enough to allow the reader to understand for whom those objectives might be relevant and their indicators assessable and useful. One example of this perceived weakness might be in Objective #3 (Student Participation) in Core Theme #1, where the Outcome is stated as: “Students receive training to continue and advance in their professions,” and the “institutional indicators” are “the number of students in agency sponsored or industry sponsored or non-credit courses.” One further example, this one from Objective #1 of Core Theme #2 (Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities), is in the Objective that states: “Faculty, staff, and students engage in research and scholarly activities,” and the “institutional indicators” are “the percentage of faculty and students engaged in organized and independent research, scholarly activities, and creative projects.” The Evaluation Committee found that “objectives” and “indicators” such as these neglect to provide adequate means of yielding information about the activities for determining how well the university (and its many units and programs) are actually meeting the rather vague objectives. There appears to be, for instance, no recognition of the very different kinds of research that faculty with different appointments or in different disciplines carry out or that students might engage in. The way in which the objectives and indicators for research are stated, one would think that all of these faculty and students engage in the same kind of research. The lack of specificity in such cases was a cause of concern for the Evaluation Committee.

c. Indicators of Achievement of the Core Theme Objectives

See the discussion of the Evaluation Committee's concerns about the sufficiency of the Indicators proposed in the Self Study (above in section "Definition of Fulfillment..."). A related Recommendation is included in the Commendation and Recommendation Section at the conclusion of this report.

d. Rationale as to Why the Indicators are Assessable and Meaningful Measures of Achievement of Core Theme Objectives

Many of the rationales articulated in the several sections of the Self Study that set out to provide Objectives, Institutional Indicators, and Rationales for the Core Themes and the Outcomes attached to each of them can be considered to be good first steps. However, the Evaluation Committee found that many of the rationales lacked adequate specificity to suggest how these would be tied effectively to the assessments and indicators as these were identified in those sections. The rationales do generally suggest why the objectives were identified as they were, but what seems missing is a discussion of the important connections between and among objectives, indicators, and rationales. Again, as stated above in the previous sections of this report, more careful and thorough articulations of the indicators are advisable, articulations that connect all three parts of this effort (objectives, rationales, indicators).

SECTION III: CHAPTER SUMMARY

With a very short timeline to meet the deadlines for this Pilot Year Three Evaluation and Site Visit, the University of Alaska Anchorage accomplished a great deal toward pioneering the new (and still changing) NWCCU Standards. The University is to be commended for its creative and diligent efforts in adapting and expanding its relevant processes to make substantial progress toward fulfilling the new requirements and articulating how it is going about that task. In the sections of Chapter One above, the Evaluation Committee has attempted to suggest, on the basis of its study and visit, those areas in which UAA appears to have achieved its stated goals and objectives in the context of this accreditation process and where it still needs further effort and work.

As indicated above, the Evaluation Committee found that the current Mission Statements of both the University of Alaska System and the University of Alaska Anchorage appear to be well-conceived and accurately reflect, albeit in the usual brief fashion of current mission statements, the general missions of both the UA System and UAA. Additionally, the UAA Mission Statement appears carefully aligned and in harmony with the other articulations of the university's vision and its strategic planning goals and objectives.

The Evaluation Committee has also commented in some detail above about its generally very positive response to the Mission Core Themes as these have been identified and articulated, as well as its very positive impression of the broad base

participation that was utilized across the university to develop and foster widespread understanding of these Core Themes. Further, the Evaluation Committee has indicated above what additional work it deems advisable, especially in the area of “institutional indicators,” in order to achieve an acceptable and optimally useful threshold of mission fulfillment.

Finally, in summary for Chapter One of this evaluation report, it should be noted that both Commendation # 1 and Recommendation #1, that are included in the Commendation and Recommendation Section at the conclusion of this report relate to topics under discussion in Chapter One above.

CHAPTER II--STANDARD TWO: RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

Section I:-- 2.A Governance

The University of Alaska Anchorage is one of three Major Administrative Units (MAUs) of the University of Alaska System. The System is overseen by a Governing Board of eleven members appointed by the Governor for eight-year terms, with the exception of the student regent who serves for two years. The Board appoints a President, who reports to the Board and who oversees the implementation of Board policies and manages the University of Alaska System. The System maintains a number of system-wide councils through which discussion and resolution of system-wide issues takes place.

The University of Alaska Anchorage is led by a Chancellor who serves as the Chief Executive Officer of this University. The Chancellor is assisted in her tasks and responsibility by her Cabinet which includes the Vice Chancellors and the Senior Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness, Engagement, and Academic Support. Each of the “community campuses” is led by a Director who reports directly to the Chancellor, but functions in some ways similarly to an academic dean.

The Evaluation Committee heard enthusiastic praise for what is perceived broadly across the several constituencies of the university as not only a rhetoric of “shared governance,” but the reality of “shared governance,” at least at the UAA institutional level. The Committee members heard repeatedly how accessible the Chancellor and her Cabinet are, how well they involve the entire university in important discussions and decisions, how well they listen to all constituencies and constituents, and how highly respected they are for their leadership and leadership style both on and off-campus. The Committee members heard such comments from Deans, Directors, Faculty Leaders, Student Leaders, Staff Leaders, and off-campus Advisory Board members. The two Regents with whom the Evaluation Committee

Chair had the opportunity to meet also stated that the President and the Regents feel very strongly that the University of Alaska Anchorage is being governed in exemplary fashion.

One of the few concerns or possible areas of improvement in this regard that members of the Evaluation Committee heard suggested that the physical distance between the community campuses and the Anchorage campus seemed occasionally to be a cause for those constituencies to feel out of the loop, misunderstood, and neglected. Although these groups also expressed general praise for the University's leadership and the ways in which they are included meaningfully in governance processes, discussions, and decision-making, increased attempts by Anchorage administrators, faculty, and even relevant staff to visit and spend time on the community campuses might be useful in improving the relationships and coordination even further. Another concern expressed by a number of faculty, staff, and students at UAA during the site visit suggested that they felt they had very little connection to the UA System, its leadership, and the Board of Regents, and often felt in the dark about system-wide policies and issues. In short, they often stated: "Fairbanks seems a long ways away." (The System offices are located in Fairbanks).

UA System-wide policies as well as those specifically pertaining to UAA (institutional, for students, faculty, staff, and administrators) are kept up-to-date through regular review and revision, and they are made readily accessible to constituents and interested and effected parties on appropriate web sites and in numerous publications.

The Evaluation Committee also was convinced through its study of relevant documents and its many discussions with a broad range of UAA personnel and students, as well as with community members beyond the campuses, that UAA enjoys a very positive reputation for representing itself clearly and honestly; that its leaders and personnel "exemplify high ethical standards;" that its policies protect everyone against conflict of interest situations; and that it upholds the important principles of academic freedom for students and faculty alike.

The Evaluation Committee found, in short, no evidence that UAA is in any way out of alignment with any aspect of Standard 2. A (Governance).

In light of the very positive comments heard consistently about UAA's governance and its leadership, the Evaluation Committee offers the following Commendation (also included in the Commendation and Recommendation Section at the conclusion of this report):

COMMENDATION:

The Evaluation Committee commends the University of Alaska Anchorage for the transparent ways in which it engages in planning, decision-making, and budgeting, and for the exemplary ways in which leadership, governance,

significant discussions, planning, and decision-making are the work of a wide range of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and external constituents. Such wide and open participation has clearly created a culture of respect, confidence, and trust across the University and into the Anchorage community, a culture in which all parts feel appreciated and “listened to.”

Section II—2.B Human Resources

The University employs qualified personnel in sufficient numbers to advance its mission and core themes and fulfill its program goals. Positions are classified based on University of Alaska system-wide standards, taking into account the roles and responsibilities specified in the position description. Position announcements provide prospective applicants with information on necessary qualifications and application procedures. Nonetheless, the Evaluation Committee heard frequently about the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified faculty at all levels.

The University’s recruitment search standards and hiring processes appear to be well defined and managed in a manner that reflect adherence to established workforce goals. Human Resources Services assigns search consultants to work with each administrative or academic unit of the University. Nonetheless, because of the difficulty in attracting applicants for non-teaching positions to Alaska, UAA frequently relies upon internal promotions, recruitment inside Alaska, and succession planning to fill vacant positions. Since the university often relies on “promoting from within” to fill those vacant positions, and because, as suggested below in that performance evaluations for non teaching staff “tend to be uneven,” the Evaluation Committee makes Recommendation # 2 included at the conclusion of this report in the Commendation and Recommendation Section.

The Evaluation Committee found UAA’s performance evaluation processes tend to be somewhat uneven. For instance, executive administrative personnel are evaluated on an annual basis, while many other non-faculty personnel are evaluated episodically and not systematically.

The University makes a number of professional development opportunities available to all employees. Because of the distance from the locations of most professional conferences and workshop offerings, the University has needed to create and sustain its own in-house staff training programs, for instance. The program offerings are comprehensive and show attentiveness to the skill development needs of staff.

Faculty Development seems to be supported in multiple ways. The Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence (CAFÉ) provides valuable faculty-to-faculty peer support to enhance teaching and classroom effectiveness. Additionally, faculty development is supported at the department level, as well as through university-

wide programs such as the faculty development fund, sabbaticals, and both research and strategic opportunity funds. Nonetheless, the Evaluation Committee did hear rather often from faculty at both the Anchorage campus and the community campuses that additional faculty development funding and opportunities for travel to conferences, workshops, etc. outside of Alaska would be very beneficial and enhance their work.

UAA recruits faculty nationally and requires credentials appropriate to the academic program and discipline. As is appropriate, search criteria are determined by the academic program conducting the search and must be approved at the senior administrative level. The University is, however, at times challenged to find appropriately qualified adjunct faculty and to recruit and retain qualified tenure-track faculty. This appears to be an “Alaska” challenge, and even though no easy answer seems at hand, the fact that all seem aware of it does lead administrators and faculty members to do everything they can to recruit the retain the best candidates and faculty possible. Those who are recruited and stay are generally heard to say that “the University of Alaska Anchorage is a great place to work.”

Each faculty member is assigned a reasonable and appropriate workload, with commensurate expectations, determined by the position description under which the individual is hired. However, the Evaluation Committee heard some concern expressed during the site visit about the differing roles and expectations regarding research and even service, since the actual positions for faculty at the different levels, in different programs, and at different locations are not similar in all ways. It also heard concerns expressed by representatives of the community campuses that occasionally those responsible on the main campus of UAA for the later steps of evaluation regarding community campus faculty did not seem to have adequate first hand knowledge of either the individual faculty members under review or the different conditions under which they work.

All faculty members are evaluated regularly, consistent with the collective bargaining agreements. The bargaining unit by which the faculty member is represented determines the specific components of the evaluation process.

Section III—2.C Education Resources

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) offers a wide array of programs, consistent with the broad mission of the university. UAA provides access to students seeking preparatory and developmental courses, technical programs, two-year associate degree programs, baccalaureate programs, graduate programs, and undergraduate and certificate programs in Southcentral Alaska. Programs are delivered in Anchorage: through community campuses and affiliated locations (Chugiak-Eagle River Campus, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Fort Richardson, Kenai Peninsula College, Kodiak College, Matanuska-Susitna College, and Prince William Sound Community college), and using distance technologies. The programs and

services provided through the university meet system, institutional, and professional requirements. Over 50 programs are accredited by external accrediting, professional and agency bodies.

UAA is committed to meet work force development needs, developing and sun-setting programs to meet the needs of the communities and employers in Southcentral Alaska. Examples were provided of inter-unit collaboration to support these programs across college and unit administrative lines. This level of coordination integrates input from professional organizations, stakeholders, and employers in the design and delivery of programs, consistent with several identified core themes. A few programs, such as nursing, are offered statewide by UAA.

Learning outcomes have been identified and adopted at the course, program, and institution levels. Faculty members are expected to provide a syllabus for each course and include student learning outcomes and expectations for student performance in the syllabus. Faculty members have the option to publish program outcomes in the following ways: listed in the program description in the *Catalog*, included on program promotional materials such as brochures, and/or included on program web sites. There was inconsistent access to published student and program learning outcomes in a review of programs in the *Catalog*, on college and program web sites, and course syllabi available on college and program web sites. Institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), adopted in spring 2009, are published in the *Catalog*. A faculty committee has been formed to develop assessments with differentiated expectations for student performance in the types of programs and degrees offered by UAA.

Faculty members are responsible for providing learning opportunities for students to meet established course and program outcomes. Students meeting the requirements and articulated outcomes for courses, as well as other stated program requirements, are eligible for the degree or certificate they are seeking. Specialized degree requirements are specified in the *Catalog* and in program and course descriptions.

A librarian serves as liaison between the Consortium Library and the faculty in each academic department to ensure that appropriate library services and information resources are made available to that department. Those services include class instruction in the use of library resources and development of print and online resources to assist students in finding materials needed to complete course assignments.

Criteria for admission to preparatory, technical, certificate, and degree programs are included in the *Catalog* and on many college and/or program web sites. Credit requirements for degrees are specified in Board of Regents policy and are included in the *Catalog*.

Structures and processes are in place for the design, implementation, and assessment of academic programs and courses. What appears to be less clear are the steps that should follow the assessment of individual programs and courses in order to make relevant improvements suggested by these assessments. Curricula are initiated by faculty through a well defined process provided in the *Curriculum Handbook*. The review and approval steps are clearly outlined for course changes and for program changes. Within the process, the faculty Undergraduate Academic Board and the Graduate Academic Board review and act on the curriculum proposals, and proposals are acted on by Faculty Senate. Credit maximums for technical, degree, and certificate programs are established by Board of Regents policy and are provided in the *Curriculum Handbook*.

Processes are in place for the acceptance of credit from other colleges and universities. The initial review is conducted at the Registrar's Office using established professional procedures for the review of courses. In the event that a course is not counted toward a specific requirement, students can seek a departmental review of course equivalence. Credit from non-accredited institutions is typically not accepted. A department petition process exists for these requests; but few requests are approved.

Undergraduate Programs

General university and general education requirements (GER) are described in the *Catalog* for undergraduate certificate, associate of art (AA) degree, and baccalaureate degree programs. Students enrolled in undergraduate and occupational endorsement certificate programs must meet the general university requirements specified for the certificate program. Students seeking the Associate of Applied Science degree must complete nine hours in oral and written communication as part of the degree program. A list of approved courses is provided for students selecting courses to complete general and specific course requirements for the program. Program learning outcomes are included in some applied science program descriptions in web site information. The AAS program outcomes are published in the program section of the catalog for most AAS degrees, but not all.

General university and general education requirements are specified for students seeking the Associate of Arts (AA) degree and the baccalaureate degree. Student learning outcomes for the AA degree are stated in the *Catalog* and include two categories of requirements: 1) Basic College-Level Skills, and 2) Disciplinary Areas. Students seeking a baccalaureate degree have a similar structure for GERs, however these degrees also require an Integrative Capstone experience. Student learning outcomes are stated for the AA degree and the GER component of the baccalaureate degree, and lists of approved courses are provided from which students select the ones used to meet their degree requirements.

The third tier for baccalaureate programs is an integrative capstone class where students demonstrate higher order thinking skills from knowledge gained and evaluated critically in their program. Outcome(s) in Knowledge Integration and at least three of the other four outcome categories (Communicate Effectively, Think Critically, Use Quantitative Data, and Recognize and Use Various Information Sources) are addressed and assessed in each capstone course. Baccalaureate programs include preparation in general education and in the content of the disciplines of the degree programs. The General Education Requirements Committee (GERC), under the Undergraduate Academic Board, provides the governance structure for faculty in the design, implementation, assessment, and refinement of general education requirements for the associate and baccalaureate degree programs.

Concern was expressed, as noted earlier in this evaluation report, about the challenges of identifying, hiring, and retaining qualified faculty to meet the needs of students in general education and in other parts of the academic curriculum. The small population base in the areas where the community campuses are located and the limited numbers of individuals qualified to teach in specialized areas contribute to a challenge in staffing and reducing class access for some programs. This is an area where planning for enrollment changes within a coordinated resource alignment process will help support the core theme of students access.

Graduate Programs

Graduate programs offered at UAA are aligned with the mission of the system and the university. Degrees offered through the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business and Public Policy, Education, and Health and Social Welfare, the Community and Technical College, and the School of Engineering provide advanced preparation through curricula that provide students with depth of study and application through course work, scholarly endeavors, and/or professional practice. Faculty members participate with the University of Alaska Fairbanks in the joint offering of three doctoral programs. University of Alaska Anchorage admits students as part of the Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho medical education consortium (WWAMI).

Clearly defined policies for admission, retention, and return of students (after stop out, for example) enrolling in graduate programs are included in section 12 of the *Catalog*. In some cases, individual program requirements exceed those of the university. These and other requirements specific to a degree are included with the degree information in this section of the *Catalog*.

Graduate degrees typically include at least 24 credits of course work other than thesis. Most graduate programs require a thesis, individual research, project, or guided professional practice experience as part of the program. Credit is awarded for these learning experiences which are shaped, monitored, and evaluated by university faculty.

Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs

Continuing education units (CEU) can be awarded for approved learning activities. The request for CEUs follows the course approval process described in the *Curriculum Handbook*, with final approval at the college level. CEU credits are transcribed separately from degree credits. The opportunity to engage with the public through continuing education at all campuses is central to the Teaching and Learning Core Theme, and it also contributes to the Public Square Core Theme.

Concern:

Program and course learning outcomes are not published consistently in course syllabi and program descriptions (e.g., catalog, web) (2.C.2, 2.C.11).

Section IV—2.D Student Support Services

UAA approaches its relationships with students using a broad definition of student success. Among the University's major student success objectives are: ensuring access and successful transition for students; supporting persistence and student progress towards educational goals; nurturing student engagement on and off-campus; and promoting academic achievement and distinction. Additionally, UAA is committed to creating an effective learning environment and sustaining a vital, healthy, safe and secure campus. The University's programs reflect a connection to the institution's mission and core themes.

Student programs and services advance the University's mission by contributing to the education and development of students. Programs and services are organized and function in a manner consistent with the University's mission as an open access university striving to create a "rich, diverse and inclusive environment." The University offers a comprehensive array of student support programs and services across a variety of units to respond to the unique and varying settings through which educational experiences are offered. Student support professionals in Student Affairs, Administrative Services and Academic Affairs, perform their roles in a way that acknowledges student learning occurs in all aspects of a UAA student's collegiate experience. The Faculty Development Center (CAFÉ) through its faculty-to-faculty consultation process provides skill development opportunities to teaching faculty. The University's orientation programs and supplemental learning initiatives support students' transition needs and acknowledge the support needed in high-risk academic courses. The University has a comprehensive counseling and support network for students manifesting distress or the need for professional intervention.

University leaders may want to give attention to ensuring greater faculty development opportunities for those teaching faculty who deliver courses through

electronic means; students report unevenness in faculty proficiency in this context. Additionally, the increasing numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students makes it imperative that the University address the shortage of sign language interpreters. The current situation creates additional hardships for currently enrolled deaf students.

Policies, procedures and programs appear designed to be in alignment with the University's mission. Campus regulations are widely and clearly communicated in a variety of formats.

The University Police Department employs 15 full time professional police officers, certified by the Alaska Police Standards Council. University police maintain a mutual support agreement with the City of Anchorage Police. UAA has a well-developed emergency preparedness system, including: a campus alert system; pandemic flu plan; active shooter notification; and natural disaster warnings. In addition, a variety of safety trainings are provided to campus community members, including rape aggression training; alcohol and drug awareness; and personal safety and theft prevention programs.

Students are provided with clear and accessible information regarding their rights and responsibilities. Federal crime reporting is performed as required and statistics are available on the University website and in campus publications.

As an urban, open enrollment university, UAA recruits and admits an academically and demographically diverse student body. UAA has an extensive outreach program to Alaska High schools, while its TRIO Programs provide a vehicle for providing early college exposure for at-risk populations, starting with fifth-graders. Criteria for admission to the University are well articulated. Students admitted at various program levels are generally provided with appropriate support services, in direct response to the unique skills, educational goals and characteristics of the in-coming student.

The University employs a decentralized advising system, housing a professional Academic Advisor/Student Success Coordinator in each academic college to meet the needs of students having declared a major. Academic success is further supported by the Advising and Testing Center, AHAINA Student Programs (targeting Students of Color), Native Student Services and Disability Support Services, offices serving undeclared, non-degree, Associate's degree and underrepresented students.

The initial academic schedule and course placement for admitted students is determined based on a mix of assessment measures, testing and prior academic performance. The University's approach to academic advising is strong and comprehensive. All students are provided with relevant academic policy information, including transfer and graduation information when appropriate. The

University works very closely with students throughout their academic career to monitor degree progress.

Especially given the fact that a portion of UAA’s curriculum is designed to be responsive to workforce needs that may change, the University appropriately has a published “teach out” policy, as well as guidelines for the substitution of courses in the event of program or course elimination.

As suggested in the section of this report under Standard One, UAA makes available in print and on-line for all interested parties information on its mission and core themes, entrance requirements, grading procedures, the academic calendar, faculty and administrator titles and academic qualifications, academic program information and other information pertaining to the cost of attendance, financial aid and refund policies. For instance, UAA publishes and distributes its University catalog annually. The catalog provides students with essential information on policies, procedures, academic program requirements, rights and responsibilities, and course offerings. Through the University’s catalog students are provided with information on licensure, certification and other career entry requirements.

University employees are provided with regular training, and UAA adheres to a strict policy regarding the release and retention of student records. Student records are appropriately maintained and backed up on secure systems. Students are provided with information regarding institutional policies on the release of records.

Student financial aid policies are clearly communicated, as is information on types of financial aid provided by UAA. The University’s Division of Enrollment Management has published processing time projections for financial aid applications and appeals. Aid is delivered to students in an efficient and timely manner.

All students receiving and accepting student loans are required to participate in entrance loan counseling. Any student dropping below half-time status, withdrawing from the University or graduating must complete a student loan exit interview. Student loan default rates are regularly monitored and published.

University student support personnel operate on a student development philosophy, which is apparent in all aspects of student life, advisement and campus programming. Services and programs are designed to address the common and unique needs found among the diverse students at the University. Through an array of offices and programs, student from diverse cultural background, those with unique educational needs and students having life situations that create challenges in navigating the university settings are provide with resources and supports to facilitate success. There is clear evidence that advising personnel work well to ensure seamless transition of students in advising relationships.

Student support staffs across the University have appropriate professional preparation and appear to be well qualified to execute the responsibilities of their roles and advance the University’s mission. The University conducts regular evaluations of its advising system. Advising requirements and types of advising provided are determined by the student’s enrollment status. These requirements are made available to students in multiple forms.

UAA offers a rich and diverse array of extra-curricular activities for students. The University employs, thoroughly trains and closely supervises student activity planners who work with students to arrange and manage student programs. All evidence suggests that the University is characterized by a dynamic and vibrant cultural life.

Auxiliary programs are part of the Division of Administrative Services. These programs are closely aligned with the University’s educational and co-curricular programs. Faculty, staff and students have sufficient input on services and programs. Auxiliary programs are seen as integral components of efforts to build a strong UAA community.

The University sponsors intercollegiate sports at the Division I and Division II levels. The Department of Athletics functions consistent with the mission of UAA. Student athletes, in general, must exceed the University’s admission standards in order to qualify for eligibility under NCAA standards. The Athletic Department is administered consistent with University policies and procedures.

In short: the Evaluation Committee found that UAA provides an excellent education at multiple levels for its diverse student population and a safe, secure and supportive environment in which they can achieve their educational and personal goals. The Evaluation Committee found no areas but one (suggested below as a “concern”) in the Student Support Services portion of Standard Two that are not positive. And the Committee heard consistently from students that UAA is a great place to be a student.

Concern:

Program and course learning outcomes are not published consistently in course syllabi and program descriptions (e.g., catalog, web).

Section V—2.E Library and Information Resources

Library and information services are provided to the students, faculty, and staff of the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) through libraries on the community campuses, the Consortium Library (a joint library of UAA and its neighbor, Alaska Pacific University), and their collaborating partners. The Consortium Library facility, in particular, is large enough and flexible enough to

support the continually changing ways students and faculty engage with each other in the learning and research processes. Considered as a whole, these central and community libraries that serve the university have the resources and capacity to fulfill the university's mission, accomplish core theme objectives, and achieve the goals of university programs and services that require library support.

This requires purposeful effort by a library that supports a breadth of needs as varied as individuals who are pursuing personal development goals and programs ranging from continuing education and technical training to academic degrees and faculty research. The library approaches the resulting resource demands on staffing, collections and facilities through collaborations within the university, locally, and statewide. For example, the Consortium Library and Anchorage's public library share a library information system and offer reciprocal privileges in lending and reference services. As a result, the Consortium Library does not need the level of library systems expertise it would need to support an independent system, and enjoys considerably reduced annual costs of system maintenance. In addition, the Consortium Library can identify areas of collection development that can be met by the public library so that UAA funds can be targeted selectively to meet academic needs.

The Consortium Library includes all UAA faculty and students, regardless of location, in its licenses for electronic databases. While funding for library support is part of each community campus budget, the Consortium Library is a major supplier of information resources for the whole university.

The libraries are not dependent on UAA funding alone. Some extensive and basic electronic resources are provided through state-wide licensing that received base funding by the legislature a number of years ago. While that base funding has not increased to compensate for rising subscription costs, the UAA library dean has been able to obtain grant funding each year to bridge the gap.

Adequacy of resources is, in part, a function of effective use of available resources, and the Consortium Library has in place a number of practices that support selective and targeted allocations. The library liaison program is an example. Each librarian serves as liaison with faculty in several academic departments. The liaison works with departmental faculty to identify essential resources to acquire materials, to provide instruction to classes so that students will be able to identify and make effective use of available information resources, and to develop other research aids that will help students complete assignments. In addition, using the nationally normed *LibQual* survey instrument, the library receives feedback from the university community on the quality and adequacy of information resources, library facilities, services, and hours. Coupled with information gathered through the liaison program and analysis of data gathered routinely about use of services and facilities, and use of collections held by the Consortium Library as well as those borrowed from other libraries, staff are able to focus and adjust staffing, allocation of space in the building, and collection

development to meet the changing needs of the university. Through its website, the library leverages the resources the librarians develop for one constituency to provide information and instructional tools to students and faculty regardless of location.

Librarians collaborate broadly throughout campus to provide opportunities for faculty and staff engagement in developing knowledge about library resources through faculty development programs (such as those provided by the CAFÉ) and engage faculty in library assessment and planning through the Library Advisory Committee.

In summary, there are factors that hold promise for continuing adequacy of resources, as well as potential threats to adequacy of resources in the future. Promise is offered by

- historic support through the university’s budgeting process for addressing inflation in the cost of library materials;
- Ongoing collaboration between librarians and college faculty in the selection of library resources and development of library services that are appropriate for students and faculty in every discipline;
- Ongoing collaboration among libraries locally and state-wide to share resources; and
- Ongoing assessment of users’ needs and adjustment of services to address changing needs.

Potential threats are posed by

- Inflation in the cost of information resources;
- Dependence on grant support (which currently comes from the state library) to bridge the widening gap between funds allocated for joint collections and rising costs of those resources; and
- Adoption of new academic programs that require high-cost information resources without investment of adequate base funding for supporting resources.

Section VI—2.F Financial Resources

As part of the University of Alaska system, UAA functions under the policy direction of the Board of Regents (BOR). The BOR has a well-documented and comprehensive set of policies and processes that guides all aspects of financial planning and management. Per the BOR bylaws, the board’s committees “study problems in the areas assigned to them and advise the board as to appropriate policy changes and actions.” The committees pertinent to financial resources include the Finance, Audit, and Facilities and Land committees. The Audit Committee is designated as a standing committee. The board reviews audit plans

and results, approves operating and capital budgets, approves issuance of debt, and monitors performance.

Responsibility for financial planning, management, and implementation under the BOR's policy guidance is a shared responsibility between the System staff and UAA staff. As noted in the UAA self-study, "the UA System leadership and the UA System staff play important management, support, internal coordinating...and external advocacy roles and provide some services to all of the campuses." System staff have direct management roles in certain areas, such as investments, debt management, financial information systems, financial statement preparation, and cash management. In other areas, the primary responsibility and control rests with the university. (Standards 2.A.28, 2.F.4, 2.F.7)

A noteworthy strength in the university's application and management of its financial resources is the very intentional way that it has linked resource allocation to its strategic plan, mission, and core themes. Equally significant is that it has done so in a manner that is inclusive, collaborative, and transparent – and this in return has reinforced the university's Core Theme # 4: UAA Community. This strategic allocation process is facilitated through the Planning and Budget Advisory Council (PBAC), a representative group comprised of faculty, staff, and students. PBAC operates within a strategic guidance framework developed by the Chancellor's Cabinet and focuses its efforts on two primary financial planning activities: (1) establishing budget priorities that form the universities operating budget request to the System and the State; and (2) allocating and reallocating operating budgets among and between university programs and activities.

The fundamental operating principles of the PBAC process include: (1) ensuring that any uncontrollable fixed cost items and mandated activities are funded; (2) retaining 2% of unrestricted revenues for contingency as required by the System; and (3) creating and allocating a Strategic Opportunity Fund targeted to strategic investments. It also employs a tuition revenue-sharing model which allocates 80% of the revenues to colleges based on student credit hour enrollments and 20% for central obligations. In addition, the university instituted a policy enabling units to retain their carry-forward funds in order to promote efficiency and sound management.

Across the board, university constituents expressed an understanding of and support for this process for strategically aligning resources. Within the process, they also reported finding opportunities to discover and discuss innovations, to discover what could be possible with additional funding, to better understand the diversity of needs within the university's mission, and to better understand the university's financial challenges. (Standard 2.F.3)

While the university's ability to internally align resources with strategic intent is a key strength, its primary challenge lies in finding a sustainable funding model to carry its mission into the future. The university has benefited from strong

State support, which contributed 44% of its FY09 operating revenues. But uncertainty about future State economic drivers and current fiscal realities are causing UAA to think about how to best fund its mission. One issue is how to fund growth. The university has an open enrollment policy as part of its mission as an “open access university” and is currently experiencing substantial enrollment growth. However, the budget allocation model for State funding gives increments for initiatives and does not take a formula-, workload-based approach to enrollments. According to studies by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), Alaska tuition and fee rates are among the lowest in the region compared with public 4-year institutions and among the highest compared with public 2-year institutions. Therefore, UAA’s capacity for net tuition revenue growth is likely best analyzed at the program level. It should be noted in this context, however, that tuition rates are not set by UAA itself, but by the UA System. The enrollment growth mentioned above is placing stresses on campus space and human resources was a recurring topic in campus conversations. A second issue is how to fund deferred and long-term infrastructure needs. According to a 2009 UA System report, the university has a current deferred maintenance backlog exceeding \$200 million. While the university has both an operating budget allocation process and a capital master plan that is wedded to its strategic plan, it will need to pursue ways of seeking funds to apply to its plans. (Standard 2.F.2)

In order to address these operating and capital budget needs, the university has already taken some initial steps. It has retained a consultant to conduct a review of the university’s resource allocation process and its impact on constituencies. It is implementing an enterprise-wide space scheduling system and is conducting a comprehensive space utilization study in order to use existing space most efficiently. The university is focusing its efforts toward increased alumni and donor support in order to diversify revenue streams. It will be important for the university to continue to develop funding and planning models appropriate to its mission in order to sustain its ability to fulfill this mission in the longer term.

As the university looks to fundraising as an additional source of support, it also must look at the corporate relationships between UAA and the University of Alaska Foundation, a separately incorporated 501(c)(3) that serves all three UA institutions. The foundation-university corporate structures are intertwined, with officers of the institutions serving on the foundation’s Board of Trustees, UA System employees serving as financial staff for the foundation, and the UA President appointing the foundation treasurer. While such a structure is reflective of universities that are relatively young, the university is encouraged to review its policies and agreements to ensure an arms-length fiduciary relationship between itself and its fundraising foundation. (Standard 2.F.8)

Concern:

An area of concern is the university’s current low level of reserves and therefore its financial flexibility. UAA closed FY09 with a fund balance of less than

5% of its unrestricted revenues. Balancing this low level of reserves is the consideration that, as part of the University of Alaska System, UAA potentially has access to other funds as a contingency. In order to ensure a financially sustainable future, the university is encouraged to review its financial policies to ensure the adequacy and liquidity of its reserves. (Standard 2.F.1)

The related Recommendation # 3 about this concern is included in the Commendation and Recommendation Section at the conclusion of this report.

Section VII—2.G Physical and Technical Infrastructure

Just as it has done with its operating budget planning, the UAA is being very intentional in its master planning for facilities in alignment with its mission and core themes. Equipment needs are incorporated in the university's PBAC strategic allocation process.

The university's master plan was updated in 2009, includes all UAA locations, and reflects the university's physical needs and aspirations. UAA recently completed the new ConocoPhillips Integrated Sciences Building, construction of a new health sciences building is under way, and there are plans to build a new facility to support athletics and recreational programs, although complete funding for this latter facility has not yet been secured. The university has constructed a covered walkway along the spine of the main campus to facilitate safe and secure pedestrian travel in winter weather conditions and has a robust shuttle system working along with a new loop road system. The loop road, however, covers only a part of the shuttle route. As noted previously, it faces existing and future challenges in adding to or repurposing spaces to serve its diverse mission and growing enrollments, and this was an area of concern repeated in conversations with campus constituents. Based on benchmarks with peer institutions in analysis by the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), UAA estimates itself to be undersized by 30 percent in the amount of physical space on a per capita basis. The university is exploring partnerships and performance contracting arrangements as means of addressing space and deferred maintenance needs. (Standards 2G.1, 2.G.3, 2.G.4)

The university recently expanded its staffing in Environmental Health and Safety to keep pace with growth, and facilities staff work in partnership with public safety and student governance to discuss safety and security concerns. The university's public safety staff employs a community policing model consistent with its UAA Community theme. (Standard 2.G.1)

UAA has substantially restructured its information technology organization, capabilities, infrastructure, and services in the past decade. It has robust data networks within the Anchorage campus and among campuses and excellent capacity for Internet connectivity. These adequately support administrative and operational functions within and among UAA campuses as well as transmission of data between

UAA’s campuses and the University of Alaska administrative systems housed in Fairbanks. They also have the capability and capacity to support the teaching of courses across the network and across the Internet from all campuses. UAA has implemented voice-over IP technology, data centers to house and secure IT servers, and wireless technology across its locations. IT has developed five-year plans to address future needs, and these are financed either through recharge structures or requested through the PBAC operating budget process. An IT governance structure is in place to gather input about services and user needs. In the past year, UAA participated in an external security assessment and received favorable ratings for its business practices: “Compared to other universities of similar size and complexity, UAA is above average in meeting control objectives.”

One area that will require further development in order to serve user needs and the university’s mission is user training. Currently highly decentralized and uneven, user training ranging from effective use of administrative systems to skills in basic office technology is inconsistent. IT leadership noted that this is an area for which it does not have dedicated staffing, and training needs were also noted frequently in campus conversations. (Standards 2.G.5, 2.G.5, 2.G.6, 2.G.7)

CHAPTER TWO—STANDARD II: SUMMARY

As the above Chapter Two/Standard Two discussion indicates, the Evaluation Team is convinced that the University of Alaska Anchorage, including its community campuses, is a well-governed and smoothly functioning higher education institution. To be sure, it faces challenges in terms of being able to accommodate rapid enrollment growth with adequate financial resources and facilities, of being able to address the diverse demands on its resources, personnel, and programs as it carries out its broad mission in several locations, and in terms of adjusting to the dynamic changes in American and Alaskan higher education in general. Nonetheless, with the few areas that the Evaluation Committee singles out above for special attention, the University of Alaska Anchorage is certainly on the right track with its planning and its efforts to provide all of its constituents and constituencies with adequate resources in the context of its mission and their needs. But given the recent, rapid enrollment growth and the tightening of budgets, the Evaluation Committee offers its final Recommendation # 4 included below in the final section of this report.

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS:

1. The Evaluation Committee commends the University of Alaska Anchorage for doing an excellent job of responding to the requirements of these new and still-changing standards in a shortened time-frame, and for tying so well the institution's Mission to the new Core Themes. Further, we commend all involved in this effort for regarding this requirement as a process of discovery and an opportunity to think deeply and in new ways about the University. In so doing, the University community has impressively and wisely aligned this new approach to accreditation with practices in place, including perhaps most importantly, the existing Strategic Planning Processes. It is both clear and commendable that the University of Alaska Anchorage regards all of this activity as ongoing, iterative, inclusive, and important.
2. The Evaluation Committee also commends the University of Alaska Anchorage for the transparent ways in which it engages in planning, decision-making, and budgeting, and for the exemplary ways in which leadership, governance, significant discussions, planning, and decision-making are the work of a wide range of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and external constituents. Such wide and open participation has clearly created a culture of respect, confidence, and trust across the University and into the Anchorage community, a culture in which all parts feel appreciated and "listened to."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

(All of the Committee's Recommendations are based on Draft 4.0 of the Revised NWCCU Standards)

1. Even though the Evaluation Committee commends UAA for the diligent and excellent work it has done in articulating Core Themes that emanate clearly from its mission and strengths, and even though the objectives it cites under each theme are convincingly articulated, we recommend that the University continue refining its indicators and mechanisms for assessing how well it is achieving those objectives to ensure that they employ a reliable range of "meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators." (Standard 1.B.)
2. The Evaluation Committee recommends that the University develop and implement a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of staff members at all levels. Given the assertion we often heard that UAA relies heavily on "growing its own staff" from within, it seems especially important that such an evaluation system be employed in order to have documented performance information on all staff employees. (Standards 2.A.16, 2.A.17, 2.B.2)
3. The Committee recommends that the University review its financial policies to ensure the adequacy and liquidity of its reserves. (Standard 2.F.1)

4. **Given the recent, substantial increase in student numbers and resulting pressure on curricular and student service access, the Evaluation Committee recommends that UAA undertake a concerted effort to connect its enrollment forecasting and management activities more directly to its planning efforts in the areas of course offerings, budgeting, space, and personnel in order to ensure desired student access and success. It appears that important pieces and tools are in place for this effort, but at present they don't appear to be integrated or fully adequate for addressing the growing challenges of student enrollment increases. (Standards 2.B.1, 2.D.1, 2.F.2, 2.G.1)**

Appendices