



*Final Wrap-Up of UAA 2020, UAA's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan*  
September 2021

As UAA proceeds with the implementation of its new strategic plan, *UAA 2025*, it is important to review achievements and lessons learned through the fulfillment of the previous plan, [UAA 2020](#). These institution-wide plans are time-bound and identify specific areas of focus critical to meeting UAA's mission. *UAA 2025* builds upon *UAA 2020*, a 3-year plan that placed student success as the top priority for the institution. *UAA 2020* bridged the previous accreditation cycle and informed development of measures for the new accreditation cycle.

**BACKGROUND:** In February 2017, UAA adopted *UAA 2020*, a new strategic plan following the expiration of *UAA 2017*. Recognizing the more fiscally constrained operating environment in the state of Alaska and its impact on the institution, *UAA 2020* had a shorter timeframe and a reduced set of priorities. The *UAA 2020* goals and objectives reflected a campus-wide effort that began in fall 2016, informed by UAA's accreditation self-study open forums and analysis. In the first phase, an online survey and faculty, staff, and student focus groups identified and agreed upon four university values: student success, excellence, access, and affordability. These values served as a foundation, strengthened by an analysis of UAA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, for developing the goals for the plan. In a one-day facilitated session, 74 representatives from across the institution narrowed the list from the 24 proposed goals from 16 campus units to six for Cabinet review. The three goals and eight objectives refined by the Cabinet, focus on increasing student success and streamlining institutional processes.

**NWCCU COMMENDED UAA ON PLANNING PROCESS:** UAA launched *UAA 2020* as the institution completed its Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report covering the 2011-2017 accreditation cycle. In NWCCU's report reaffirming UAA's institutional accreditation, one of the four commendations made was on UAA's "inclusive planning process which brought the campuses together in an unprecedented effort to focus on Student Success." NWCCU encouraged the continued focus on collaborative student success efforts and asked that these be addressed in a follow up [Ad Hoc Report](#). The report successfully demonstrated UAA's continued commitment to student success through ongoing collaborative efforts and serves as an excellent archive of the student success work that was done at UAA as part of *UAA 2020*.

**OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS:**

**Student Success:** The implementation of *UAA 2020* exemplifies the integration of assessment, planning, decision making, and resource allocation. Leadership recognized that progress on the goals and objectives of *UAA 2020*, particularly as they related to student success, would require

designated responsibility and a commitment of resources. To that end, in November 2017, Claudia Lampman was hired as the interim vice provost for Student Success, and the appointment was made permanent in October 2018. In spring and summer 2018, Lampman completed research on best practices, held numerous information sessions with key faculty and staff, joined the EAB Student Success Collaborative and adopted EAB tools, “Campus” and “Guide” which UAA branded as *Seawolf Tracks* to give front-line staff an online case management tool to better serve students. These tools also provided students with easy access to set up appointments and contact advisors. By fall 2018, the Office of First Year Student Advising and Success, now called the Office of Student Success, opened in the Professional Studies Building with a centralized and trained team of seven advisors, including an advisor for Alaska Native Student Success, led by Valerie Robideaux as director. In addition to these advisors, the College of Engineering and the Community and Technical College dedicated advisors to serve first year students. Now, in fall 2021, Valerie Robideaux holds the title director of Student Success Initiatives. In this enhanced role, Ms. Robideaux is charged to sustain coherence across UAA’s many success initiatives and to help UAA assess their effectiveness.

This team has been supported by the Student Success Advisory Council, *Seawolf Tracks* Leadership and Communications Teams, the Academic Advising Steering Committee, the NWCCU Student Success Academy, and the First Year Experience Committee. Each has led work in five main areas:

First Year Student Advising and Success,  
*Seawolf Tracks*,  
Academic Advising Alignment,  
Academic Pathways, and  
Peer-to-Peer Initiatives.

In addition to the extensive review in the Ad Hoc Report to NWCCU, annual reports from the Office of Student Success for FY19 and FY20 provide more detail on work completed, goals, and outcomes.

*This section looks at the outcome goals identified in UAA 2020 and provides information on progress toward those goals. Of note is that over the period of UAA 2020’s implementation, UAA successfully responded to structural damage from a 7.1 -magnitude earthquake, major budget cuts, and a global pandemic. These challenges impacted the achievement of the UAA 2020 goals and made the progress described below all that more significant.*

## **GOAL 1: Advance the culture of institutional excellence that inspires and enables students, faculty, and staff success.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

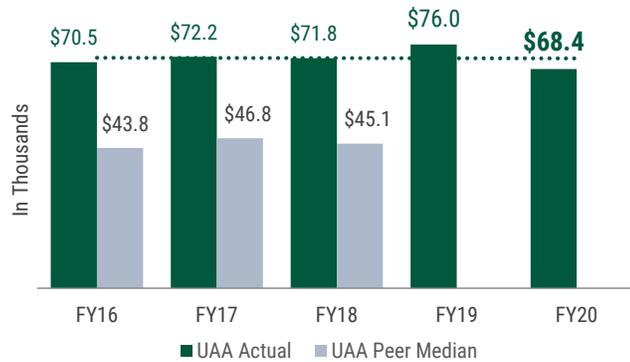
- **Identify and remove significant barriers to student, faculty, and staff success.**
  - The Office of Student Success conducted the Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges (RISC) survey with a representative sample of UAA students enrolled in courses with 25+ in spring 2020 across all campuses (of the 791 students from those courses, 397 completed the survey 50.2%). To find out the results, visit the [RISC survey](#).

- As part of the UA System Alaska Native Success Initiative, UAA compiled data and completed a list of recommendations to improve Alaska Native student, faculty, and staff success, with a focus on recruitment and cultural training.
- Financial resources can be a major barrier for students to continue and ultimately complete their degree work. UAA offers a wide range of scholarships and grants to assist students. In AY2021, special funds, dedicated scholarships, and other federal and state funds enabled UAA to offer scholarships to students to add a class in fall 2020 and spring 2021, fund 128 students through the Seawolf Retention Scholarship, provide completion grants to qualified students within 67% of completing their programs, and fund administrative scholarships to cover past due balances for students in need so they could enroll the next semester.
- In fall 2020, UAA launched the 49<sup>th</sup> Finishers Scholarship, a joint effort between Admissions and Financial Aid. This initiative encourages non-traditional, former student (UAA or otherwise) to renew their pursuit of a degree through a renewable financial resource. A total of 155 Alaskans took advantage of the scholarship for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- Revised placement procedures to include writing samples resulted in 70% higher placements, saving students time and money toward their degrees. Also developed course matching survey to implement multiple measures in both Writing and Math placement as a part of the NWCCU Student Success Academy.
- UAA's response to the pandemic began under the *UAA 2020* strategic plan. The shift to virtual operations prompted new and creative approaches across UAA. While it does not replace in-person interactions, the shift to virtual solutions did result in some new opportunities for greater engagement with students and included the removal of several barriers to student access and success. Some examples include virtual appointments with financial aid and HIPAA-compliant ZOOM telehealth appointments.
- Disability Support Services (DSS) partnered with peers at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the University of Alaska Southeast to streamline the accommodation request process. UAA students register for classes across the UA System, and each DSS office had its own form and protocol. Now, all three universities use the same process, and students need to register only once for accommodations across the three universities. Streamlining this process for students removes hurdles, allowing students to concentrate on their coursework, rather than on navigating three different institutional bureaucracies.
- In fall 2020, the UAA bookstore transitioned to an online bookstore, using the Akademos platform. The virtual platform provides a more contemporary method for students purchasing their course materials, allows for faster faculty adoptions, greater student choice and on-time access, and saves students significant textbook costs. While the transition has not been without some bumps in the road, the UAA faculty have surpassed their colleagues at other institutions in terms of timely course materials adoption.

- Facilities and Campus Services planned and implemented the major relocation of Enrollment Services and Financial Services from University Center to the main campus. This brought critical student services to the place that students take their classes and engage actively with their faculty and other student support services.
- Facilities and Campus Services distributed adjustable-height tables in classrooms to accommodate students with specific needs. The office also designated all gender restrooms across campus promoting student success and accessibility.
- The Office of Sponsored Programs, under the direction of the Office of Research, implemented public process queues, improving operational efficiency and workflow transparency.
- **Improve access to and satisfaction with academic advising.**
  - A team of dedicated first-year advisors was hired in 2018 and received initial training with ongoing trainings.
  - Created a common student appointment campaign calendar and established a Banner advisor maintenance plan, improving access.
  - Over time, *Seawolf Tracks* has improved access to advisors. The Office of Student Success reports 10,456 student interactions in FY20, a nearly 300% increase from FY19.
  - In August 2020, the Office of Admissions and Office of the Registrar implemented the Seawolf Transfer Trail. This new platform provides prospective transfer students just-in-time information about how their previous college-level work will transfer to UAA and apply toward various degree programs. More than 750 unique users have used the Seawolf Transfer Trail platform.
- **Employ process efficiencies (improvements) that lower the cost per award.**

*Cost per award is calculated by dividing the total instructional and student-related expenditures by the total awards conferred in an academic year.*

  - The target for this measure was to lower the cost per award to \$68,000. Deans took intentional steps to lower the cost per award, such as limiting duplicate sections and reducing the number of electives offered. Substantial budget cuts in FY19 to FY20 might also have played a role. Overall, awards increased to 2,339, and the cost per award ended up very near the target for FY20.
  - Facilities and Campus Services monetized off campus properties, bringing in much needed revenue to be allocated to mission-critical initiatives.



## GOAL 2: More students persist and complete their educational goals.

### OBJECTIVES:

- **Increase the ratio of credits students earned to credits attempted (a component of Satisfactory Academic Progress) by 5 percentage points by 2020.**

*This measure focuses on first-time students in their first year.*

- UAA improved the rate but did not achieve the 81.5% target. Advising to place students in the correct sequence of courses combined with improved support systems, including integrated faculty progress reports and alerts into the advising framework and practices, all contributed to improvement on this measure.

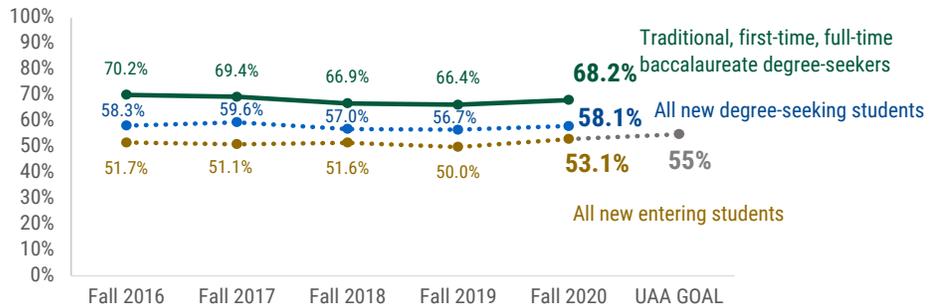


*The next two objectives relate to retention and persistence. These were both impacted in fall 2019 by the prolonged debate about drastic cuts to state funding for the university. The uncertainty created by this crisis resulted in a 13% drop in enrollment from fall 2018 to fall 2019 (-1,878), and a decline in retention rates. The UAA Office of Student Affairs conducted a “UAA Misses You” survey in September 2019 ([Student Affairs Assessment](#) webpage). In this survey, 86.7% of respondents cited “Uncertainty about UAA’s future and/or the potential loss of academic programs” as the most influential reason for not enrolling or returning.*

- **Increase new entering student retention from their first fall to the second subsequent fall to 55 percent in the third goal year (fall 2020).**

*This measure includes all new students entering in a given fall term regardless of degree-seeking status.*

- UAA improved the rate, especially after the dip in fall 2019, but fell short of the 55% target. In fall 2020, the traditional rate for first-time, full-time baccalaureate degree seekers rose for the first time during the plan timeframe. It is also valuable to note that the rate for all degree seekers rose to 58.1% in fall 2020, from 56.7% the previous fall. This reflects the emphasis on degree-seeking students in the Office of Student Success.
- Another data point of note is that among those students who did not return for a second term at UAA, at least 1 in 4 transferred elsewhere to continue their studies.



- **Increase the rate at which students persist from their second to third year to 45 percent in the third goal year (fall 2020).** *This measure includes all new students entering in a given fall term regardless of degree-seeking status.*

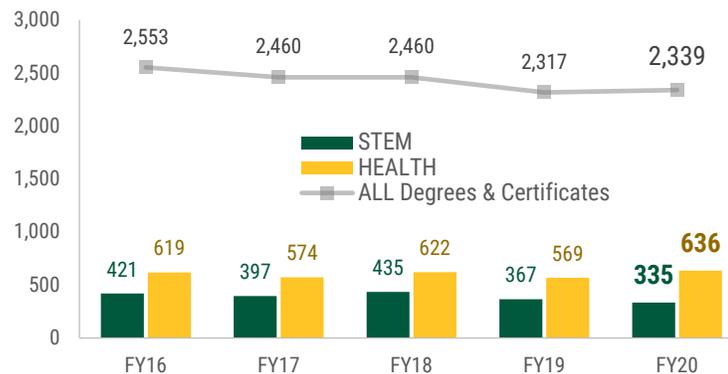
- The trend on this measure declined. The rate for all new entering students dropped four full percentage points, while the rate for the traditional first-time, full-time baccalaureate degree seekers fell nearly seven percentage points. The return rate for all degree seekers reached 42.7% in fall 2020, up from 40.5% in fall 2019, but down from 44.7% in fall 2017.



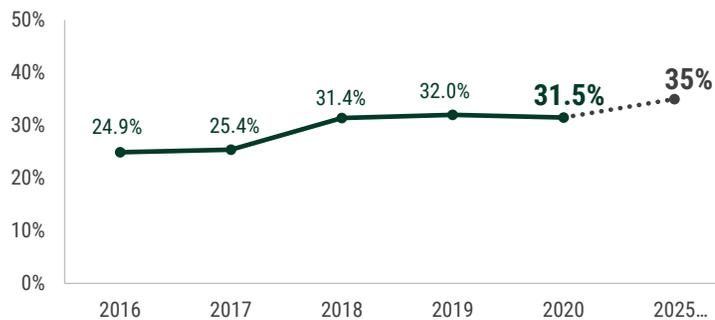
### GOAL 3: Graduate more students to fill Alaska’s needs.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- **Increase the number of graduates in high-demand job areas by 2 percent per year.** *This measure was revised to match UA System goals for STEM and Health degrees from the general high-demand job areas tracked previously.*
  - STEM award totals declined by 9% from FY16 to FY20. Award totals peaked in FY18, the first full year of UAA 2020.
  - Health awards rose 3% from FY16 to FY20 and showed a 12% increase from FY19 to FY20.



- **Improve traditional graduation rates to 35 percent by AY25.** *This measure tracks the percentage of first-time, full-time baccalaureate degree-seeking students entering in a given fall term who earn their degrees within six years. The 2020 rate measures the cohort who entered UAA in fall 2014.*
  - UAA improved its graduation rate from 2017 to 2018 and held steady through 2020. The 2025 rate will reflect the 6-year graduation rate for the cohort who entered in fall 2019. The improved retention rate for that group from fall 2019 to fall 2020 suggests the graduation rate could reach the goal, though the declining trend from first to third year for previous cohorts is of concern.



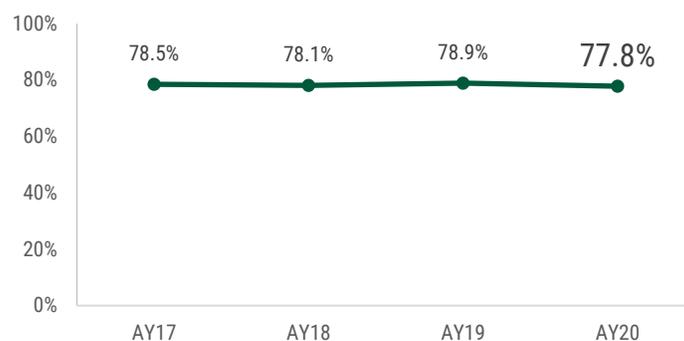
## LEADING INDICATORS

The Vice Provost for Student Success and the Student Success Advisory Council approved the following leading indicators to assess progress in achieving the identified goals. No targets were set for these leading indicators.

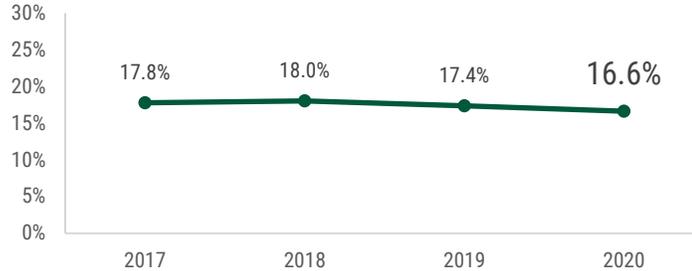
- **More students see advisors.**
  - The addition of dedicated first year advisors, and the training for and use of the *Seawolf Tracks* tool for students and advisors resulted in increases in student contacts in FY19 and FY20. As stated earlier, the number of student interactions with advisors increased nearly 300% from FY19 to FY20.
  - The progress report function of *Seawolf Tracks* across UAA launched in FY20, identified 4,336 students in need of interventions across six progress reports over two semesters.
- **Increase percentage of students passing lower division courses.**

*This is based on students who earn an A, B, C, or P in 100-200 level courses in an academic year (summer, fall, spring) divided by all students enrolled in the course except those who are auditing the course or received no grade.*

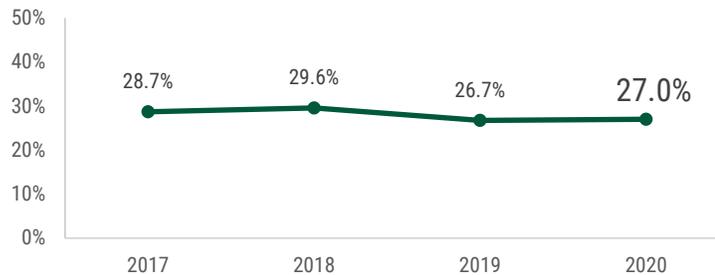
  - The pass rate for lower division courses nearly reached 79% in AY19, but dipped in AY20 to just under 78%. A survey of students in spring 2020 indicates that the pandemic may be responsible for the decline. The majority (75%) said the switch to alternate delivery had a definite or somewhat negative impact on their learning, and half said they expected their grades for spring 2020 would be much or somewhat worse than in past semesters. Eighty percent of students surveyed cited trouble balancing school and life responsibilities and COVID-related anxiety were cited as interfering with their success.



- **Increase percentage of students taking 30 credits per year, including summer.**
  - This percentage decreased, reflecting an overall increase in the percentage of UAA students who enroll part-time (fewer than 12 credits per semester) since 2018.



- **Identify and reduce number of bottleneck courses.** *Bottleneck courses are defined as those with a greater than 90% fill rate.*
  - The percentage of courses with a 90% or greater fill rate declined from the beginning of the plan timeframe.



- **Decrease time-to-degree after 60 credits.** *This is measured in years after a student reaches 60 earned credits.*
  - The time-to-degree remained relatively unchanged over the course of UAA 2020 plan timeframe, dipping slightly in 2019, but rising again in 2020 to just over the rate in 2017.



## CONCLUSION:

*UAA 2020* put an intense spotlight on student success, and the initiatives produced by the plan have transformed the institution. New processes, dedicated advisors, best practices, ongoing research and education among staff and faculty have enabled UAA to begin moving the needle on improving student persistence, some measures of retention, and graduation. In addition, *UAA 2020* raised awareness that faculty and staff success are integral to student success. The ability to focus on core responsibilities is key to institutional effectiveness. The new strategic plan *UAA 2025* acknowledges this through its commitment to continuous improvement and the reduction of barriers and redundancies in administrative processes. While UAA may not have reached its *UAA 2020* targets on all measures, improvements were achieved despite some overwhelming influences beyond the institution's control.

**Expanding the focus and learning more about all UAA students:** *UAA 2020* expanded the focus from the traditional first-time, full-time degree-seeking students to include students enrolled part-time and those who entered as non-degree seeking. Part-time students represent the majority (63% in fall 2020) of students enrolled at UAA, and it is important to understand what success looks like for these students. The work begun with *UAA 2020* demonstrated the importance of tracking the success of part-time students consistently, and UAA's student achievement metrics now disaggregate data by full-time and part-time students.

The inclusion of non-degree seeking students also helped UAA learn more about this population. Many are indeed degree-seeking, but are enrolled in programs at another UA institution. A growing number are among UAA middle college students, who are not counted among post-secondary degree seekers. Still others are enrolled at UAA for personal and/or professional enrichment.

**Looking forward:** *UAA 2020* accomplished the goal of serving as a short-term bridge plan between *UAA 2017* and the next longer-term strategic plan. Student success will continue to be the focus at UAA through the *UAA 2025* strategic plan and in the student achievement metrics identified for the current institutional accreditation cycle. The current accreditation cycle focuses in particular on closing equity gaps in student learning and achievement, and the institution has the values, commitment, and structures in place to do so because of the efforts of many individuals and groups dedicated to the goals of *UAA 2020*.

## DEFINITIONS for *UAA 2020*

1. **Student:** an individual enrolled at the institution for credit or as an auditor.
2. **New student:** "New" is defined as a student who has not been enrolled at UAA during previous semesters/terms.
3. **New entering student:** includes first-time, full-time, degree-seeking student (traditional cohort), new transfer student, new part-time student and new non-degree seeking student.
4. **Earned credits:** credits for which a student receives a passing grade (A, B, C, D, or P). Auditors do not get a grade or credit.
5. **Attempted credits:** credits for which a student signed up regardless of pass/fail status.

6. **Ratio of earned credits to attempted credits:** total earned credits divided by total attempted credits.
7. **First-to-second fall retention rate:** the number of students returning for their second fall divided by the total students enrolled during their first fall.
8. **First-to-third fall retention rate:** the number of students returning for their third fall divided by the total students enrolled during their first fall.
9. **STEM and Health awards:** the number of certificates and degrees awarded during an academic year in programs assigned the Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes for each area. STEM awards include: 11-Computer, 14-Engineering, 15-Engineering Technology, 26-Biology, 27-Mathematics, 40-Physical Sciences, and 41-Science Technologies. Health awards include these CIP coded programs: 51-Health Professions and Related Fields, and 42-Psychology.