



# UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Faculty Senate Diversity Committee  
3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage Alaska 99508  
Prof. Thomas Chung & Prof. Erin K. S. Hicks, Co-Chairs

Date: December 21, 2020

To: Chancellor Cathy Sandeen  
Members of the Chancellor's Cabinet  
Interim Chancellor Bruce Schultz  
Provost Denise Runge

From: Faculty Senate Diversity Committee

Subject: Concern Regarding Alaska Native Faculty and Student Retention

In light of the recent loss of 50% of Alaska Native faculty at UAA, the Faculty Senate Diversity Committee wishes to bring attention to and share our concern regarding the retention of Alaska Native faculty and students at UAA. The Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2022 is a UAA effort designed to contribute to and enhance the rich, diverse, and inclusive environment at UAA. Included in the Plan's Objective 1 is the priority to promote targeted recruitment efforts with special attention on underrepresented populations, especially Alaska Natives: "The level of representation of all diverse ethnicities is below what we expect based on the population demographics of Alaska, with Alaska Natives being the most dramatic difference. Generally, UAA needs to promote awareness of UAA positions among all diverse ethnicities, but particular attention needs to be paid to encouraging Alaska Natives to apply for UAA positions. The very low representation of Alaska Natives is directly attributable to the very low number of Alaska Native applicants" (Kamahele, 2017:9).

More recent recommendations made by the Alaska Native Studies Council are attached, and it is the belief of this group that following previous recommendations is the way to best serve our Alaska Native community. We would like to underscore and support the recommendation that the University of Alaska sets a goal of increasing Alaska Native faculty by at least 10% by 2025.

UAA had a 9% graduation rate in 2019 for Alaska Native students, the lowest of every demographic. As of Sept. 29th, 2020, the total faculty count is 468 on all UAA campuses, 134 term and 334 TT/tenured. Currently at UAA, there are only 9 Alaska Native faculty, with only 4 tenured or tenure track, which is 1.9%, overall and 1.2% of tenured or tenure track. It is clear that we are failing to support the Alaska Native community as an institution. The responsibility to correct this path has been made easier by the effort of previous working groups.



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**We therefore request that the findings of previous groups tasked with Alaska Native retention be implemented. We also request that the incoming Alaska Native Education and Outreach Executive Director be provided adequate budget and authority to significantly assist in retention efforts.**

Thank you for your dedication and commitment,

Sincerely,

Erin K. S. Hicks (FSDC Co-Chair)

Thomas Chung (FSDC Co-Chair)

## 2020-2021 FSDC Members

Carrie Aldrich, Writing

Sigrid Brudie, Library

Matthew Calhoun, Engineering

Yvonne Chase, Human Services

Amber Christensen Fullmer, Director of Native Student Services

Thomas Chung, Fine Arts

Herminia Din, Arts

Gabriel Garcia, Population Health Sciences

Songho Ha, History

Annette Hornung, English

Ryan Harrod, Anthropology

Erin K. S. Hicks, Physics & Astronomy

Wei-Ying Hsiao, Education

Seta Kabranian-Melkonian, Human Services

Emily Madsen, English

Amana Mbise, Social Work

Jennifer McCurdy, Philosophy

Vanessa Meade, Social Work

Virginia Miller, Population Health Sciences

Anita Moore-Nall, Population Health Sciences

Maria Williams, Alaska Native Studies

Kimberly Pace, Political Studies and Women's Studies

Evan Shenkin, Sociology

Michele Yatchmeneff, Engineering

Annie Ping Zeng, Language

ALASKA NATIVE  
STUDIES COUNCIL



TO: Heather Batchelder, chair, Faculty Alliance  
Jak Maier, Vice Chair, Faculty Alliance

FROM: Alaska Native Studies Council

September 10, 2020

The UA system has major issues in retention and recruitment of Alaska Native and Indigenous Faculty.

The Alaska Native Faculty make-up 3% of the overall faculty numbers. Yet we are 20% of the overall population, and our student populations are significant; Alaska Native students at UAF are 21% (<https://uaf.edu/facts/>) and at UAA 10% and 26% at UAS.

This is a huge disconnect.

In the current AY 2020: UAA and UAF are pink slipping tenured and tenure track Alaska Native Faculty. 4 at UAF and 2 at UAA. Additionally at UAA SEVEN Alaska Native faculty have left due to institutional racism and non support of their research and their presence at the University. UAA has only added one additional Alaska Native tenure track faculty in fall 2020. UAA has over 1,500 Alaska Native students and UAF has 1,700. UAS has had three Indigenous faculty leave in the past year. So their numbers are shrinking as well, with no plans on recruitment. How can the University ignore the attrition of the Alaska Native faculty and move on pink slipping them?

The Faculty generate student tuition revenue - this will be lost if they are pink slipped. Their courses also reflect the mission. All three universities have established courses that meet the Alaska Native Studies GER. With shrinking faculty, it is eroding the ability to offer the full suite of courses in this area, thus hurting student options for this GER.

We are anonymizing the names of the faculty - but are providing detail below.

From “NATIVE ELEPHANT” Self Evaluation: “As of August 2020, I am currently on six graduate committees as a member; and chair or co-chair for 28 graduate students.<sup>1</sup> I have successfully graduated ten students, as their chair or co-chair, to completion of their graduate programs, including one Ph.D. Calculating research dissertation/thesis/project credits alone for all the students I currently chair or co-chair, **UAF will receive at least \$196,776**. The amount does not include the graduate course credits each student is currently taking for their respective programs.”

Below is a list of courses “NE” has taught with 10-30 students enrolled on the average, teaching an average of six classes per academic year:

CCS/ED 419 & CCS/ED 619: Cultural Atlas as a Pedagogical Strategy

ANS 160: Alaska Native Dance

ANSX/ANTH 242: Indigenous Cultures of Alaska

CCS/RD/ED/ANL 608: Indigenous Knowledge Systems

ANS/ED 420 & ED 606: Alaska Native Education (UAF’s only SOE ANT course)

ED 682: Re-thinking Multicultural Education

ED 601: Introduction to Applied Social Science Research

ED 593: Professional Development

CCS/ED 603: Field Study Research Methods

EDSE 457/657: Multicultural Education

ED 693: Indigenous Values in Education

ED 687: Alaska: Resources, People and Perspectives

#### Faculty “B”

This faculty has taught ten different undergraduate and graduate classes over the years. She developed two new classes and substantially updated five classes. She taught an average of five classes a year with an average enrollment of 10 to 25 students. Her graduate student committee load has varied from fourteen students to ten students a year. She also sat on three graduate committees from other departments and last year chaired four committees.

Faculty “P” Was hired ABD and completed their Phd in 2018 and was in a tenure track position. This faculty published and taught and provided service - yet received a one year notice. This faculty received limited and uninterested mentoring by a non-Native faculty member assigned to them by the dean. Faculty P never felt there was support or adequate mentoring for their position within an ever-changing environment. The one year notice was very traumatizing. Faculty P did not have a clue they were going to be become ‘pink-slipped’.

Another UAF Faculty who had a terminal degree (MFA) was a tenure track in tri-partite. This faculty received a one year notice and decided to leave the system because of the terrible treatment they received.

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<sup>1</sup> To chair or co-chair this number of students would be highly unusual or even forbidden in any R1 university. If UAF wants to promote quality graduate programs AND support Indigenous faculty, this is not a recipe for success. It also shows the need to have Indigenous faculty.

UAA had a prominent 60% Term Faculty in the Art department and had full studios yet was terminated with a two-week notice. This results in minimal cost savings, and hurts students and the reputation of the institution.

UAA has a tenured bi-partite faculty in Journalism who has taught 7 classes per year since the late 1990's. Generating lots of tuition revenue with average class sizes between 15-30 students (\$12,000 to \$24,000 per class in student revenue). They received a one year notice, even though they are tenured and generate tuition dollars.

Traditional University structure does not work for Alaska Native Studies and Native programs. Chancellors and Deans often make decisions that are ill informed and biased without taking into account the recommendations of the Alaska Native faculty and staff. The Native faculty voices and recommendations are ignored.

Native programs and classes should be centrally located and easily accessible for students to attend classes, obtain mentoring and socialize. A 'village' within the University.<sup>2</sup>

Sequential retention: this has been observed over and over again, issues of the retention of Native students. It is suggested that offering courses at the 100 level to 'on-board' Alaska Native students is a key to success. The university must invest in these courses - despite enrollments. The investment pays off with better retention of Alaska Native students.<sup>3</sup>

Alaska Native faculty are recruited to tenure track positions with the expectations of being mentored and supported in their respective institutions. This is not happening. Alaska Native faculty are not being mentored, not being supported by their respective Chair/Dean's/Directors/Provosts and Chancellors.

Once the Alaska Native Faculty are hired, they are required to publish, teach, and provide service. All the Alaska Native faculty have developed unique courses, published academic articles and participated in academic conferences, and provide service to their respective universities.

### **IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

One of UAF goals is to " build and enhance global leadership in Alaska Native and Indigenous programs, research and workforce development. Our vision is that we are a global leader throughout the circumpolar North, the Americas and the Pacific". One of the ways the University can do that is to acknowledge the role that Universities have had in colonization and begin a dialogue with Indigeous people and foster a more respectful and inclusive environment.

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<sup>2</sup> The UAA 2017 Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan made this recommendation; former Associate Vice Chancellor Jeane Breinig also recommended this in a November 2018 memo to the Chancellor.

<sup>3</sup> 50% of UAA Alaska Native students drop out mid-way through their first semester.

RESCIND ANY OF THE PINK SLIPS GIVEN TO ALASKA NATIVE FACULTY at UAA and UAF

APPOINT and empower Alaska Native Faculty that are special advisors *to the President*, one from UAA, UAS and UAF; they must be faculty or have risen through the ranks of faculty.

IDENTIFY AREAS IN WHICH ALASKA NATIVE FACULTY CAN BE RECRUITED AND HIRED, focusing on the areas of attrition in which Alaska Native Faculty have left their respective institution (UAA - Business, Alaska Native Studies, Biology, Art, English. UAF - Education, DANSRD, Cross Cultural Studies. UAS - Education,