

Fisher Report and MacTaggart Report Recommendations:

1. We strongly recommend that the President of the University of Alaska make the improvement of student retention and graduation one of his very highest priorities. The focus should be upon discerning facts, causes and remedies. To ignore this problem is to waste the resources both of students and the State of Alaska.
2. State financial support for the University of Alaska could dwindle. The University should anticipate such circumstances and begin to model less generous budgets. Unfortunately, we observe the strategic plans of UAF, UAA and UAS largely do not appear to reflect such possibilities.
3. Repetitive financial cuts at the margin on all programs spread mediocrity. In the long-term, we believe it would be far better that the University completely eliminate whole programs and departments in order to sustain its support for its most vital and highest quality programs.
4. UA is not without needs and might well find it attractive to float bonds for student housing or other revenue-generating activities in the future. Suffice it to say that the UA System has the ability to do so though this would require some reallocations.
5. We recommend that the President charge appropriate staff with the investigation of public/private partnership possibilities with respect to housing, but also with respect to a variety of other activities that might be

carried out jointly (including partially privatized services, joint research and development projects, real estate developments, etc.).

6. We recommend that the respective campus chancellors keep a close eye both on programmatic expenses in intercollegiate athletics and the amount of time student athletes are unable to attend scheduled classes because of their lengthy road trips.
7. While the recipe might differ in other states, there are sound reasons in the case of Alaska to centralize programmatic approvals, technology standards and related major technology resource decisions (such as the adoption of common student, employee and financial records systems), the allocation of capital and buildings, the assessment and formulation of budget requests, the overall allocation of maintenance reserve funds, negotiation of collective bargaining agreements and fringe benefit programs.
8. Note that much greater individual campus autonomy often is sensible in states that boast much larger financial and population bases and multiple large metropolitan areas. In such circumstances, competition among institutions and the development of distinctive, specialized campuses often is highly desirable. Plainly speaking, we do not believe the State of Alaska has sufficient population and resources to permit such unrestrained competition
9. UAA's current strategic plan, which needs refinement, indicates that the institution will "reinforce and rapidly expand our research mission" and that it will "build selected research-centered graduate programs."

10. We recommend that the UA System: (A) respect the lessons of specialization in graduate work and research and identify a limited number of academic disciplines that will receive special resources and commitment, whether at UAF or UAA; (B) continue to focus UAF on its traditional strengths in the sciences and engineering; (C) focus advanced graduate work and research at UAA on the social and behavioral sciences and education and avoid replicating UAF's primary areas of expertise.

11. Despite improvements, reality is that large numbers of students begin studies at the University, but then disappear. The University needs to determine why its performance lags national norms and then, as necessary, outline how it intends to improve the situation.

12. We argue that the University might be well advised to focus its scarce dollars on a smaller number of programs, especially at the graduate level, many of which can legitimately aspire to national rankings. It is not clear to us that some of the doctoral programs at UAF would survive if such criteria were applied. We recommend that the President and the Board take a long look at this situation and reexamine the viability of programs including enrollment, retention, research productivity and graduation.

13. It is prudent for the University of Alaska to plan for the possibility that: (A) its general fund support from the State of Alaska might not keep up with price inflation; and, (B) its share of the state's budget might decline. The University should explore what the University would be like if ten years from today, the "real" (after inflation) value of its state appropriation has not risen, or even declined. What activities must the University improve or

discard to operate efficiently in such a world? What things must it begin to do if this will be the state of affairs in 2020? What would this imply for tuition and fees?

14. We must recognize that a reorganization of the University is not a cure all for whatever ails it. Even so, it is apparent that some improvements can be made. These fall into two main categories. First, as it stands, the University is overly centralized and devotes too many resources to a command and control regulator model that should instead place more emphasis upon incentives, distinctiveness and entrepreneurial activities.

15. The key to private support is relatively simple: do it —rightl and support will be forthcoming, and it has not been done —rightl in Alaska. The national average for alumni giving is over 17 percent, and some institutions go as high as 60 to 70 percent. The alumni giving percentage is the prime denominator for effective planned giving, capital campaigns and even corporate support. The President and the three Chancellors must each take thoughtful note of this. There are countless publications and conferences available, and Alaska, with its extraordinary academic culture, will be an ideal place to raise support for public higher education.

16. We recommend to accord UA’s vocational, technical and community college activities much greater prominence and not viewed as “four-year lite” (the observation of a sometimes frustrated individual associated with workforce development).

17. Our point is not to concentrate all program-reduction attention on teacher education; instead, why maintain three free-standing teacher education programs, three free-standing MBA degrees, three free-standing environmental studies programs, et al? UA often talks about being —one University, but shrinks from situations where one MAU will supply faculty and courses to another MAU, or one MAU will perform all of a certain type of administrative task for other MAUs. We believe it is time for the UA System to move off the mark on these issues and recommend that the President take steps to see that it occurs.
18. An immediate major gifts and planned giving effort, coupled with the implementation of new processes, should lead to a prompt and positive impact on the —bottom line, engaging alumni and friends in the future of the University while setting the stage for successive campaigns.
19. What is required, then, is a much more analytical, even hard-hearted evaluation of alumni activities and personnel. The bottom line is that either the events or the personnel demonstrably improve the University's position, or they should be modified or abandoned. We recommend that each campus analyze its alumni events and personnel to determine the extent to which there is evidence that they actually further UA objectives, particularly alumni and fund raising.
20. How do graduates from UAF, UAA and UAS compare nationally, since they do not complete the same general/liberal education sequences? Does the "capstone" course at UAA designed to integrate knowledge make a perceptible difference? These are important questions and we strongly

recommend that the University employ rigorous means to seek their answers.

21. We recommend that the President refashion the entire institutional research function with the UA System. If necessary, different individuals must be hired who are capable of performing sophisticated multivariate analyses and that have mastered applicable operations research techniques such as linear programming, queuing and simulations. Most of the heavy lifting in terms of institutional research should occur on the MAU campuses and experts on these campuses can be allocated specific tasks as well by the President. Relatively few central system personnel will be needed and these should focus on recording and classifying data and completing necessary reports.
22. It appears possible for a UAA student to avoid taking a laboratory science. UAF requires two laboratory science courses of every baccalaureate student, and UAS 22 requires one course (although the UAS Catalog does not make this point clear for students). For several reasons, a laboratory science experience is an essential part of a respectable liberal undergraduate education. We recommend that UA require such on every campus.
23. One university should have one set of general education requirements.
24. Incentives count where research is concerned and we recommend that the University reexamine how it utilizes and distributes the indirect cost overhead recovery funds that accompany many grants that it receives. We don't have a formula to offer that magically and optimally distributes these funds amongst researchers, departments, colleges and the University.

Nevertheless, the comments of some faculty suggest that increasing the distribution of funds to the actual researchers who generated the funds might induce more grant activity over time. These funds also could be used to nudge institutions (e.g., UAA) in programmatic and research directions consistent with the UA System's overall strategic plan.

25. A system-wide harmonious student records system is an example of where a statewide approach makes sense. We recommend that the President examine why this particular version meets with so much criticism. Do any legitimate problems that exist reside in the software, how it is managed, how it is used, lack of training, or...?
26. It would take effort for one not to be impressed by the University's massive use of technology. We recommend, however, that both the System and individual campuses spend more time evaluating what they are doing with that technology. Strong emphasis should be placed on generating rigorous empirical evidence concerning the University's use of technology and its effect upon learning and subsequent student outcomes such as retention, graduation, and job placement. The questions noted above might serve as a starting point. It is apparent that the University of Alaska already has done some of the analysis called for here; it simply hasn't done enough to justify what now is approaching a \$100 million per year expenditure.
27. Finally, while UA's technology intensive distance learning efforts are much appreciated by students, it is fair to note that some knowledgeable outsiders believe that UA is not at the forefront of distance education today. "There are some outdated in their approaches and high cost in their operations," said

one, who believes the President should bring in one or more acknowledged experts at institutions that either are on the cusp of new developments, or which currently operate highly successful, profitable programs. We concur.

28. In any case, a partial solution to the tension on this issue is to have the Board of Regents adopt refined, distinct institutional mission statements---a step we recommend. We note that as a doctoral, research institution, UAF must be accorded distinctive treatment, or it will fail. However, it is obvious that the majority of the state's population and resources are located in the Anchorage metropolitan area. Hence, the real questions are: (1) how many doctoral programs should be supported at UAF? And, (2) over time, should some free-standing, distinctive doctoral programs be developed at UAA along with a variety of other graduate and research offerings?
29. We recommend that the President give a very strong consideration to negotiating changes in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that will provide more faculty salary flexibility among the institutions and that UAF be accorded a different set of peer institutions that more closely fits its doctoral research role.
30. We have two recommendations with respect to the CBA. First, the President should work to increase the share of the total salary pie devoted to market and merit raises. If the State and the University truly believe in excellence, then they should reward it.
31. The President should end the situation where one external salary survey (the Oklahoma State University study) applies equally to all three MAUs. As we

detail below, this has worked distinctly to the disadvantage of UAF, which realistically has a very different set of peer institutions than UAA and UAS. Further, it also sometimes has resulted in a strange pattern of faculty raises that one administrator has labeled —antimerit.

32. When was the last time the President commissioned a new faculty salary study that compares UAF, UAA and UAS faculty salaries to those at carefully selected peer group institutions for each MAU?
33. We strongly commend the Alaska Scholars program, but nevertheless recommend that the President probe its effectiveness along with the University's other financial aid programs. To wit, precisely how successful are all of the University's scholarship programs in terms of retaining and graduating awardees and how many awardees subsequently remain in the state if they graduate? Are there notable difference between and among the academic disciplines in terms of Alaska Scholars attractiveness and success? Would it make more sense to offer more (fewer) scholarships with higher (lower) stipends? Should an attempt be made to endow the well-regarded UA Scholars Program?
34. Does the University conduct general examinations of how the University utilizes its scarce scholarship funds? Ideally, the University will spend its limited scholarship funds strategically in order to attain specific goals. Software now exists that permits institutions to vary their scholarship and financial aid offers in order to reach certain goals, e.g., maximization of enrollment, or other magnitudes such as SAT scores, retention, graduation,

etc. We recommend that UA explore such software. This would permit intelligent strategic decision-making with respect to enrollment.

35. In general, students typically spoke in favor of strictly designated fees, whether for additional computer work stations, more Internet bandwidth, additional on-campus entertainment, or intercollegiate athletics. We recommend that the President explore such possibilities with student leaders and determine what, if any, designated fees students might favor in order to improve the quality of their lives at the University.

36. It is apparent that UAF, UAA and UAS in many ways are not comparable to many of the state universities to which they are compared. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on the University to do more than it has to find out why the University falls short in this arena and take remedial steps.

37. We recommend that the President and the Board of Regents meet with the Governor, legislative leaders and citizens throughout the state to outline the full implications of the deferred maintenance challenge and to propose solutions.

Alaska Advisory Task Force on Higher Education

3H. The University of Alaska Board of Regents should review their current models of providing developmental education, analyze what programs work best, what alternatives and emerging pedagogies show promise, and what best practices are being utilized in other states. The review should consider the cost of developmental programs, including the efficacy of incentives to effectively move developmental students into standard curricula.

Additional Policy Areas Potentially Impacting Student Retention, Remediation, and Graduation Rates

- Carefully analyze and weigh the differential student costs at branch or extended campuses in comparison to attending main campuses. Should tuition and fees be substantially reduced for students attending the smaller campuses?
- Consider using modern classroom (or cyber-room) teaching practices; including for example, replacing traditional textbooks with electronic books, and providing the option for students to view classroom lectures remotely, via the internet.
- There were a number of findings in the recent Fisher Report (2011) and MacTaggart Report (2008) worth pursuing to improve the University of Alaska system both regionally and as a whole. The University Of Alaska Board Of Regents should carefully consider external reviews, such as the Fisher Report (2011) and the MacTaggart Report (2008), to assist in identifying changes that will create financial and programmatic efficiencies, improve quality, support collaboration between campuses, and foster student success at the University of Alaska.