

University of Alaska Community Campus Impact Study

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Executive Summary

This report is a compilation of 13 University of Alaska (UA) community campus impact reports (12 physical campuses and the Rural College virtual campus) completed by McDowell Group between April 2009 and March 2010. In the spring of 2009 when these studies began, data for 2008 was the most recently available; therefore the reports focused on fiscal year 2008 and Fall 2008. The reports present descriptions of each campus, its service area, and programs and degree offerings. Data gathered included enrollment, student demographics, campus employment, revenues, and spending. Copies of the 13 individual campus reports are available from each campus.

The purpose of these reports was twofold. One was to highlight the community campus system's significant employment, payroll, and economic activity in more than 50 Alaska communities. These impacts not only occur in Alaska's larger urban centers but also affect many of Alaska's rural regional centers and villages. The analysis of quantifiable measures is based on the aggregate of all 13 UA community campuses. Following the aggregate analysis, a table outlining each campus's contribution to the total is presented. Second, and at least as important, is the qualitative information concerning the positive social and economic impacts UA community campuses and programs have on individual Alaskans, their families, and their communities. Qualitative information was gathered through interviews with campus administrators, local government officials, community leaders, and prominent individuals within the business communities to capture their opinions of the impacts of their local community campus. These individuals provided many heart-felt comments on the positive impacts that UA community campuses have on their communities.

Quantitative Findings

A summary of key quantitative findings of the studies follows.

Community Campus Student Profile (Fall 2008)

Combined, the 13 campuses served 12,832 students. Nine out of 10 students were from among 250 communities within the state of Alaska. Slightly more than two-thirds of students attended part-time. Just over half of students were degree seeking. Sixty percent were female. Nearly two-thirds were white and one out of five students was Alaska Native. The average age of students at 10 out the 13 UA community campus was above the UA system-wide average of age 30.

Student Success

Community campuses awarded 700 degrees and certificates in FY 2008. Two-thirds were Associate degrees and 31 percent were certificates.

Community Campus Direct Spending

Combined (routine and capital) direct expenditures within Alaska totaled \$82 million in FY 2008.

- Combined, campus nonpersonnel spending in Alaska totaled \$22.7 million and occurred with hundreds of Alaska businesses in more than 50 Alaska communities.

Fairbanks and Anchorage benefitted from community campus spending for goods and services (\$4.1 million and \$3.6 million respectively). Spending for goods and services in the home communities of the 13 campuses totaled \$11.5 million and contributed significantly to those communities' economies.

Direct Employment and Payroll

UA community campuses combined employed a total of about 1,400 people statewide (mid-semester) in FY 2008, with average annual employment of about 1,140 people.

Community campus Alaska-based faculty and staff received virtually all of the combined campuses \$54.7 million in payroll in FY 2008. Most payroll expenditures for each campus were in the campuses' home communities and service areas. A very small portion went to faculty living out of state.

Fund Five capital expenditures added \$4.6 million to in-state payroll spending and \$4.4 million in expenditures for goods and services.

Total Economic Impacts

Based on UA community campus annual average statewide direct employment of 1,144 full-time/part-time individuals, the campuses had an indirect and induced impact of about 630 additional jobs for a total of about 1,800 statewide jobs related to community campus spending. The additional payroll associated with this indirect and induced employment totaled about \$27 million statewide for a total estimated statewide community campus-related payroll impact of \$86 million.

Campus spending (routine and capital) of \$22.7 million created indirect and induced activity of about \$12.6 million resulting in total estimated activity related to campus spending of \$35 million.

- Total direct spending by the campuses of \$82 million created an estimated \$39 million in indirect and induced activity. This resulted in estimated total state-wide community campus-related economic activity of \$121 million.

Statewide Economic Impacts of Community Campus Expenditures, FY 2008

	Direct Employment and Spending*	Indirect & Induced	Total Economic Activity
Annual average employment	1,144	630	1,774
Labor income (payroll & benefits)	\$59,290,000	\$26,680,000	\$85,970,000
UA community campus spending	22,703,000	12,259,000	34,962,000
Total spending impact	\$81,992,000	\$38,939,000	\$120,932,000

Sources: UAA Financial Services, UAS Business Services and CRCDD, UAA, UAF, UAS Facilities Services, and McDowell Group analysis. Note: Figures have been rounded. *Includes Fund Five labor income and capital expenditures.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative findings from 100 interviews were divided into five impact categories:

Place-Based Education
Workforce Development
Continuum of Education
Personal Enrichment/Skill Building
Quality of Life

A summary of qualitative findings with supporting quotes follows. More extensive quotes are included in the Community Impacts section of this report.

Place-Based Education

- “Place-based education” means delivering education to the students where and when they need it. The ability of residents to engage in higher education while maintaining their lifestyle, families, and livelihood was mentioned positively by nearly all of those interviewed. Leaving their home community to further their education would be a hardship for many Alaskans. The prospect of leaving family, jobs, and other responsibilities is often a deterrent to pursuing higher education.
- Many enrollees, especially in rural areas, would not have even considered taking college courses if not for the availability of a local campus. In that sense, local campuses actually increase the statewide demand for higher education.
- The availability of local educational training provides convenient opportunities for teachers and other professionals to maintain their certifications without the expense of travel.
- Community campuses are in touch with their communities and have done a good job of customizing campus programs to meet the needs of businesses, organizations and individuals.

The following quotes provide examples of the importance of place-based education.

One of our Rural College health program students is a mother with 10 kids. She can't move out of the village to go to school. She takes a full-time class load, sits on community councils and has a job. We are there for students like this, the ones who cannot leave their life because their life is too important.

It is really nice to have local people earning degrees and qualifying for jobs that normally went to Outsiders.

I think one thing they do well is they have done a great service for the young people in the region. Instead of having to leave the area, and move to urban areas, they can stay here and complete their education. It provides a quality service, an educational service, and these young folks who don't want to leave the area and want to stay connected to their communities and families have the opportunity to do so. The campus understands the way of life out here, and makes suggestions to meet the students' unique needs.

Workforce Development

- Nearly all interviewees mentioned that their community campus was an integral part of workforce development in their area. This includes training workers who are new to an industry as well as providing ongoing education that leads to career or professional advancement.

A trained local workforce is a significant driver for economic development in their communities. The availability of a skilled workforce helps attract and retain businesses in a community. The community campuses provide a variety of industry training opportunities around the state with significant offerings in construction trades and health care. *(For a complete list of individual campus courses and programs see the Appendix of this report.)*

- Community campuses are responsive to the needs of local industries and the community and have created extensive partnerships.

Graduates who earn an occupational endorsement, certificate, Associate degree, or higher academic degree develop their careers and increase their earning potential. Students graduating from these career education programs are filling local jobs in high-demand areas that might otherwise go to non-Alaska residents (who may spend less of their earnings in the Alaska economy). Employers also benefit from a local source of qualified workers, resulting in an even higher level of business activity in their region.

The following quotes provide examples of the importance of workforce development in the communities.

Mat-Su College (MSC) is here to train people, mostly at an Associate's level. A lot of people go back to MSC and retool for lots of different reasons. People go, learn, and then apply what they learned, no matter what class they take. It's a driver in the workforce. Generally speaking, the more educated the people of the community are, the better the community can be.

In order to have employment in this current world economy, you must have education. To be competitive you need to have an institution nearby. A local campus makes us more attractive in the world economy.

Our main industries are commercial fishing, but we also have a need for skilled nurses, social workers, and accountants. We would have a hard time filling those positions without the campus. We really need that campus.

The economic impact is important; we are an extremely expensive place to live. For example, gas is \$7 to \$10 per gallon. The campus helps by bringing new skills so people can develop and make a living in this environment. The campus also has new curriculum and makes available classes to assist our leaders in developing ways to handle our energy issues.

The goal in our partnerships is to educate local nurses. If we fill jobs with nurses we fly in, they almost always leave, if we raise local nurses they are more likely to stay.

Continuum of Education

UA community campuses serve four purposes in the continuum of education in Alaska.

First, the campuses encourage the state's youth to continue their education (academic or vocational) beyond high school through efforts such as Tech-prep and dual credit courses. Dual credit students can graduate from high school with one to two years of college credits. This saves time and a significant amount of money in addition to preparing them to pursue a college degree. Tech-prep allows high school students to take courses that will be required once they enroll in a program at UA,

and to experience college level academics while still in high school. These programs instill a sense of confidence in students that they can be successful at a higher educational level.

- Second, the campuses provide place-based educational opportunities that allow students to enter the higher educational system at the occupational endorsement or Associate degree level. As their skills and confidence grow, they can easily transition to higher degree programs (Bachelors, Masters, and PhD's) locally (where available) or through other UA campuses or institutions outside Alaska.
- Third, community campuses in the state's rural areas help ease the culture shock that many village residents experience when they venture outside their home community. The culture shock that occurs when someone leaves their community for the first time to attend the urban campuses of UAA, UAF, or a college outside Alaska can be traumatic, resulting in the student leaving the educational system all together, perhaps never to return.
- Fourth, community campuses prepare many Alaskans for the rigorous academic environment of the university system. According to UA Planning and Institutional Research, half of all first-time UA freshman from Fall 2005 to Fall 2009 took a preparatory course (even 35 percent of UA Scholars took a preparatory course). System-wide in FY 2008, 14 percent of all UA enrollment was in preparatory courses while 16 percent of community campus enrollment was in preparatory classes. Many adults returning to education later in life or training for new careers must relearn lost skills and need preparatory courses. Foreign immigrants also benefit from developmental courses that facilitate their assimilation into the UA higher education system. The UA community campus system offers adult basic education, GED preparatory classes, and English as a Second Language, as well as developmental level courses in Math, English, science, reading, and writing.

The following quotes provide examples of the role community campuses play in the continuum of education in Alaska.

Many of our students don't even have high schools in the communities they live, and we are now engaging those students, and offering them college courses to take while in high school. It gets them thinking about college while in high school.

UAF is collaborating in the Yukon Kuskokwim area with students K-12, which makes it possible for them to be exposed to the local university through dual credits or summer programs. The "Talent Search" offered through Kuskokwim Campus bring students into the community and gives them a perspective of what it is like to be a college student. It exposes them to career opportunities in many different areas, and it makes an impact on these young peoples' lives. It allows them to see what happens beyond their world and what opportunities exist, which makes a big difference in their lives down the road. They are able to see more than just what is in front of them because their worldview is so limited right now by staying in a village of 50 to 100 people. The fact that the university provides this exposure now cannot be measured, but will be very important for the future. It shows the kids that they don't have to leave the community, but they can still do so much.

At graduation, there are usually 10 to 20 people getting recognition for getting their GED. They have gone back to school with the help of the college. I think it's a really important success story.

The Rural College has a fairly significant number of students taking developmental courses. They don't have the math skills or writing skills to be successful, so they are floundering. We ensure they are placed appropriately so they don't get overwhelmed and leave.

Personal Enrichment/Skill Building Courses

Courses taken for personal growth or enjoyment enrich the lives of community members and help them gain practical skills. UA community campuses offer a wide variety of credit and noncredit personal enrichment courses such as astronomy, ceramics, photography, weaving, beading, and art history, as well as practical skill building classes such as snow machine repair, organic gardening, Alaska Native and other languages, American Sign Language, and boating safety.

The following quotes provide examples of interviewee's thoughts concerning personal enrichment courses.

People can take courses ranging from religion to pottery. Winters are sort of long and dark and dreary, anyplace we can go to entertain ourselves and learn at the same time is good. The plant, pottery, photography and water rescue classes are good. The water safety class taught at the local pool by a certified instructor teaches people how to quickly, safely, and properly put on a survival suit. This actually helps people.

I really like the subsistence-based classes, such as plant lore, salmon camps, plant identification, and Native arts and crafts. These courses really are a benefit to the community. It keeps those crafts alive and passed on to the younger generation.

Quality of Life

- Quality of life is difficult to measure and can mean different things to different people. Usually it is a combination of factors that contribute to a person's sense of well being and happiness. UA community campuses contribute to Alaskans' quality of life in several ways. One of the most important is to help them become more financially independent. Additional education can result in a new job, a better job, or career advancement. These steps are usually accompanied by wage increases. Higher incomes can significantly benefit students and their family's quality of life, especially those in rural areas of the state where jobs are more scarce.
- Less tangible, but also important, is the sense of satisfaction and confidence that educational attainment provides.
- The campuses contribute to the quality of life in the communities through the volunteer efforts of their faculty and staff who donate countless hours to make their communities a better place to live.
- Campuses also present guest speakers, films, forums, and workshops that enrich community life.

Campus libraries are a valuable resource for communities. In some communities, the campus library is the only readily available source of reading material.

The following quotes provide examples of how community campuses effect the quality of students and community members lives.

There are scores of students' lives that have been changed forever — not just the students, but their families. All sorts of people have gone through KuC who can, and will, make solid contributions to the community.

Above and beyond what they are already doing amazingly well, I think they want to build on the good programs they have going, like the nutrition program. Not just in response to employment, but in response to diabetes in rural Alaska. Helping people in the communities be healthier, really educating people in ways they can help their children. IAC takes an idea and runs with it, and will get people excited about doing it.

Kenai Peninsula College helps to sustain our community. It helps us keep people here who want to continue their education. It makes our community more attractive to retirees who want to continue their learning. It is as important an asset as transportation or shopping.

They have the only library in the whole region. Access to the library is allowed by all community members, 28,000 people in the service area. Every community member who wants to have access to reading material and media are able to get what they need.

Outside of work, the staff and faculty are musicians, painters, potters and artists who help the community...they are adding culture to the community.