

March 15, 2014

## **SHAPING ALASKA'S FUTURE**

The University of Alaska shapes Alaska's future through leadership in student-centered higher education, research and innovation, partnerships with communities and industries, and engagement within circumpolar and Pacific Rim nations. Shaping Alaska's Future is our map for navigating the challenging terrain ahead, and it will guide decisions about people, programs and resources at UA for years to come.

The Shaping Alaska's Future initiative has created a framework for strengthening UA's culture of promoting excellence, continuous improvement and innovation. This effort has been guided by UA's mission statement: "The University of Alaska inspires learning, and advances and disseminates knowledge through teaching, research, and public service, emphasizing the North and its diverse peoples." (UA Board of Regents' Policy 01.01.01). Each of the system's three accredited universities contributes to this mission in distinctive ways.

### **Listening to Alaskans and Identifying State and National Trends**

Starting in October 2011, UA embarked on a series of more than 80 listening sessions with students, faculty, staff, alumni, Alaska's business leaders and employers, elected officials, K-12 partners and community members. The listening sessions surveyed how the UA system is performing and how it can better serve the needs of the state and its people. Shaping Alaska's Future rests on a foundation of the feedback received, summarized in five major themes: Student Achievement and Attainment; Productive Partnerships with Alaska's Schools; Productive Partnerships with Alaska's Public Entities and Private Industries; Research & Development (R&D) and Scholarship to Enhance Alaska's Communities and Economic Growth; and Accountability to the People of Alaska.

In addition to listening to Alaskans, UA leadership broadly surveyed and identified state and national higher education trends that will most certainly impact UA and its students. The federal government is demanding more accountability and improved access and outcomes; the State of Alaska predicts substantial funding reductions; and students have many choices, as the higher education landscape has never been more competitive. Students, parents, UA's business partners and prospective employers expect UA to provide excellent programs and services regardless. Therefore, UA must continuously innovate and improve.

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Based on both the Alaska listening sessions and a robust state and national dialogue, specific issue statements were developed within each theme that express compelling concerns raised about the university system. Effect statements associated with each issue statement collectively express what UA intends to accomplish specific to that issue.

Specific methods for attaining the effects both within and across all three universities will be developed and directed toward achieving measurable objectives. Objectives and methods will be tailored to the universities' missions, student populations and other unique characteristics while maintaining a system-wide, long-term perspective.

## Theme 1: Student Achievement & Attainment

<b>Issue A</b>	Like other open-admission institutions, UA’s graduation rates are lower than those of selective institutions. UA students on average take longer to complete degrees than students at peer institutions.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> Full-time baccalaureate degree-seeking students graduate in four to five years at rates competitive with those at our established peer institutions. Full-time associate degree-seeking students graduate in two to three years at rates competitive to those at peer institutions. Part-time students complete their degrees in proportionate time frames. The three universities will ensure that academic standards are rigorously maintained.</b>
<b>Issue B</b>	Like those of many large and complex institutions, UA processes and procedures can be challenging for students to navigate.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> Students experience UA as accessible, efficient, and transparent in all areas.</b>
<b>Issue C</b>	UA students must demonstrate skills and knowledge in their particular majors. In all aspects of their UA educational experience, students must also develop critical thinking skills, good judgment, high ethical standards, and an understanding of diversity to be responsible citizens and leaders.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> Students take responsibility for meeting their educational objectives, and both students and graduates demonstrate personal, community, and civic responsibility, high ethical standards, and respect for others.</b>
<b>Issue D</b>	UA needs to increase national and international recognition of its quality education, programs of distinction and exceptional research in order to enhance recruitment of undergraduate and graduate students and faculty.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA’s reputation for academic quality, programs of distinction, and research makes it an attractive, highly competitive choice for undergraduate and graduate students and faculty.</b>
<b>Issue E</b>	UA recruitment, retention and graduation rates are low, especially for disadvantaged and minority populations and for Alaska Natives.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA graduates reflect the diversity of Alaska.</b>
<b>Issue F</b>	Alaska has serious unmet needs for advanced degree graduates, and UA has opportunities to meet those needs both internally and through partnerships with other institutions.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> Alaskans have more opportunities to earn advanced degrees and more advanced degrees are earned at UA, especially those that fulfill Alaska’s specific needs.</b>

## Theme 2: Productive Partnerships with Alaska’s Schools

<b>Issue A</b>	With high expectations for the continuing impact of the Alaska Performance Scholarship and the new K-12 Alaska Academic Standards notwithstanding, today half of UA first-time freshmen do not place into college-level courses and require one or more university developmental classes at student, university, and state expense.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> High school graduation requirements and UA freshman placement requirements are aligned across Alaska and postsecondary preparation pathways are clearly identified and communicated.</b>
<b>Issue B</b>	The professional preparation that leads to retention of Alaska-educated teachers, especially those in rural Alaska, begins with UA’s education programs and continues into UA Statewide’s Alaska teacher placement process and the Alaska Statewide Mentor Program. The legislature has made it clear that UA is not recruiting enough education students and graduating enough teachers who are willing to accept positions in rural Alaska and remain teaching there long enough to positively impact student learning. Teachers moving to rural Alaska from outside the state do so without an adequate understanding of Alaska Native cultures, languages, and rural living conditions. Although UA cannot unilaterally improve teacher retention rates in rural Alaska, it can wield significant influence.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> The teacher retention rate in rural Alaska equals that in urban Alaska and is significantly improved by educating more Alaskan teachers.</b>
<b>Issue C</b>	The quality of life and the economic potential of Alaska depend on an educated population. Currently, Alaska has one of the lowest rates of high school graduates continuing directly into post-secondary education. At the same time, increasing numbers of jobs in the state require postsecondary education.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> The college-going rate in Alaska, the proportion attending college in-state, and the proportion entering postsecondary education immediately after graduating from high school are similar to other western states.</b>

### Theme 3: Productive Partnerships with Public Entities and Private Industries

<b>Issue A</b>	Declining oil production suggests a significant degree of uncertainty in state funding for higher education for the next few years while the effects of oil tax changes take hold; at the same time the state is facing additional needs for workforce education, employee training, community outreach, and research. UA must work more proactively with its partners to identify the contributions that both UA and its partners must commit to meet those needs.
	<b>Effect: UA meets the needs of the public sector and private industry for skilled employees and for research solutions via partnerships that are strategic, mutually beneficial, and address the needs of the state.</b>
<b>Issue B</b>	Partners have specific needs that may not be addressed through conventional approaches. For example, employers may need non-credit training, training at the work site, or a few days of intensive training rather than semester-based courses.
	<b>Effect: UA is flexible, innovative and responsive in working with partners.</b>
<b>Issue C</b>	Alaska Native corporations, tribal governments, and other Alaska Native entities are a unique and powerful force in Alaska’s economy. They hire UA graduates and some provide considerable financial aid to students. However, meaningful partnerships between UA and these entities are few and limited.
	<b>Effect: UA is fully engaged with Alaska Native corporations, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and other private and public entities to meet the education and research needs of Alaska Native peoples, promote Alaska Native student success, and support Alaska Native economic and cultural development.</b>

## Theme 4: Research & Development (R&D) and Scholarship to Enhance Alaska's Communities and Economic Growth

<b>Issue A</b>	UA needs to attain greater recognition for its accomplishments in research and development and its contributions to economic diversification and quality of life for Alaskans.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA is the first choice of state and federal entities and private industries in Alaska to meet their research and development needs.</b>
<b>Issue B</b>	Some Alaska Native languages and cultural traditions are endangered. Many communities do not have sufficient resources to safeguard and nurture culture and the arts, so UA plays a vital role in preserving and advancing this knowledge and these traditions.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA is a major Alaska center of culture and the arts and is a center of excellence for Alaska Native research and scholarship.</b>
<b>Issue C</b>	The effects of climate change over the next century will be profound worldwide, but they will be greatest in circumpolar regions. UA is uniquely qualified to conduct interdisciplinary research addressing changing conditions in the circumpolar arctic.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA is a recognized world leader and international collaborator in arctic research.</b>
<b>Issue D</b>	Circumpolar communities are experiencing rapid social and economic transformation due to changes in climate, ecological systems, and global interactions. These communities need research-based and indigenous knowledge in order to adapt. UA has the expertise to assist these communities, and to do so must effectively communicate with those who need it. The Alaska Science and Technology Plan exists to guide UA in developing the needed information.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> Alaskans and their communities use research-based information, enriched by indigenous knowledge, to successfully adapt to change.</b>
<b>Issue E</b>	Limited state investment in UA research capacity makes it difficult to remain competitive for research grants, contracts, and faculty.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA recruits and retains top research faculty and students and maintains modern, world-class research facilities, equipment, and infrastructure.</b>

### Theme 5: Accountability to the People of Alaska

<b>Issue A</b>	The higher education environment in which UA operates is changing rapidly. Effecting the associated cultural shift that is needed can only occur as a result of widespread faculty and staff support, commitment, and leadership at every level.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA leadership, faculty and staff articulate our future direction, discover pathways to achieve the vision, and are empowered to effect the changes required.</b>
<b>Issue B</b>	Diversity is one of Alaska’s strengths. Yet, the richness of what our universities can offer to students, employees and the state of Alaska will not be achieved until UA more fully embraces Alaska Native and other minority cultures and enhances professional development opportunities.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> The diversity of UA faculty, staff and administrators reflects the diversity of Alaska’s peoples.</b>
<b>Issue C</b>	Before UA requests additional buildings, it must ensure current facilities are fully scheduled and fully utilized.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA facilities are efficiently utilized to meet student, academic, community and research needs.</b>
<b>Issue D</b>	UA is often judged, not by the quality of its education, research or outreach, but rather by the personal experience that an individual encounters when accessing those programs. Similarly, employee effectiveness and morale depend upon their own personal experiences when they need assistance from another employee or group within the university system.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA values, supports and delivers excellent service at every level.</b>
<b>Issue E</b>	Alaska’s forecasted fiscal condition will increase expectations of the UA Board of Regents, legislators, and other community leaders that UA will further address revenue generation, cost-effectiveness, and cooperation across the UA system.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> Greater efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and revenue generation result from UA-wide collaborative decision-making and cooperation.</b>
<b>Issue F</b>	Five years of consistent state funding has significantly reduced the rate of increase of deferred maintenance. However, the deferred maintenance backlog continues to grow and there is no funding commitment after 2015 to address UA’s needs. Deferred maintenance is the UA Board of Regents’ first capital priority because the risk posed by the backlog is unacceptable.
	<b><u>Effect:</u> UA’s deferred maintenance backlog is reduced to an acceptable level.</b>