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MEMORANDUM

DATE: Thursday, May 18, 2017

TO: UA Board of Regents
UA President Jim Johnsen

FROM: UA Staff Alliance

RE: Shared governance feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing shared governance processes across the University of Alaska at the March Board of Regents' (BOR) meeting in Anchorage. Our Staff Alliance group, as well as our respective MAU-level staff governance organizations, have had the opportunity to discuss these issues further, and have identified a series of shared understandings and concerns we wish to present to UA President Johnsen and the Board, in the hopes they can help to improve and drive UA's approach to shared governance.

What is working well

- In general, our staff representatives recognize that university leadership has made recent strides to create positive and meaningful relationships with members of governance. While pleasant and productive dynamics between staff and university leadership are not new, we feel that an increased focus (perhaps in the context of governance tensions elsewhere in and the March BOR discussions that followed) on expanded, healthy, reciprocal communication will clearly improve transparency, trust, morale, and smart decision making at all levels.

What can use improvement

- In general, governance representatives feel profound strains on their service capacities. Across UA, staff positions have been greatly reduced, and those remaining have increased duties. It has become increasingly hard for staff to devote meaningful time to governance obligations. There is clear need for compensation, either for time and effort from representatives and governance administrators, or for departments to directly cover time away from regular tasks.

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- Further, it may be appropriate for UA leaders to make renewed and emphasized notice that governance work, irrespective of campus or department, is codified and endorsed as part of a staff member's regular work duties (as noted in [R03.01.F.](#)).
- Within governance structures, and as a result of top-down budget decision making, localized conflicts have arisen between staff and faculty governance. In particular, scarce and declining resources have created tension between the goals of Faculty Alliance and staff governance groups, with faculty calling for severe reductions to current staffing levels at Statewide.
- There continues to be widespread fear that leadership does not take governance input and feedback seriously, and suspicion that leadership (at both the Administration and Regents levels) will just do what had been planned all along. This seems based on both a lack of engagement from leadership with governance positions, and what some staff (and faculty and student) constituents regard as remarkably brief and uninformed discussions, preceding particularly significant and consequential decisions.
- Though it is not universal, there are widespread and attentive (based on what information and discussions are publicly accessible) perspectives that UA's Board of Regents seems out of touch with what is best for and about the University of Alaska.
- For these reasons and others, Staff Alliance strongly recommends continued and expanded formal staff governance representation on all system-wide councils, committees, and decision-making groups, in addition to our April 5, 2017 support ([Staff Alliance Resolution 2017-02](#)) for Staff and Faculty voting seats on the Board of Regents.

Best,

DocuSigned by:



Nate Bauer...

Chair, UA Staff Alliance