

February 16, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

When I announced the Strategic Pathways framework last week, I committed the university to a broad engagement with the staff, faculty, students, and governance, and to keep all constituencies as informed as possible. In preparation for the Board of Regents meeting this week, a more detailed version of the Strategic Pathways framework has been posted to www.alaska.edu/pathways. Please note that the Board of Regents is not making any decisions at this meeting. The Board already has expressed its support for the direction Strategic Pathways is heading. Of course, any decisions requiring the Board's approval will be placed before it for consideration and action at future meetings.

As you will see in the new document just posted, it's important that we set Strategic Pathways in appropriate context. Our purpose is to serve the wide variety of higher education needs in our state. Alaska depends on us to meet those needs through our research and creative activities, teaching and learning, and outreach to the public. We have done a great job over the years in performing to our purpose, but there remain many large gaps that require our focused attention. There are also several major opportunities that must be pursued.

Now, more than ever, as our budget is reduced we must find ways to serve our important purpose as cost effectively as possible.

Strategic Pathways is the framework we will use to strengthen our service to the state. It is based on the simple fact that each of our universities has unique strengths in meeting the state's needs. The framework envisions a University of Alaska where we reallocate resources from programs that are (1) not core to each university's strengths in meeting state needs; (2) challenged by low enrollment, high cost, or insufficient faculty resources; or (3) redundant with programs at our other universities. Resources will be reallocated to those programs that are tied to each university's unique distinctive strengths. Through a wide variety of technologies and arrangements across the UA system, these excellent programs will be made accessible to all Alaskans, and at a lower overall cost.

While the focus of Strategic Pathways is primarily on academic programs, administrative leaders at Statewide and on the campuses are working together to streamline processes and improve services all the while reducing costs. You can expect to see substantial administrative changes in the months and years ahead as we seek to maximize our support for our core purpose—meeting the state's higher education needs.

I envision Strategic Pathways to be implemented in 3 phases, with Phase 1 beginning this spring and Phase 3 ready for implementation no later than 2019. Faculty, staff, and students will have extensive opportunities to participate in the process and the university community will be informed of progress on a regular basis.

We are living in tough times. But we will get through them stronger if we work together—with patience and respect—for the greater good of our university, our students, and our state.

Jim Johnsen, President
University of Alaska