

For Immediate Release
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Strategic Pathways framework: Feature Topic at Board of Regents Meeting

“Strategic Pathways,” the proposed concept for realigning resources within the University of Alaska system, infused just about every part of the Board of Regents meeting Feb. 18-19 in Fairbanks, from the system governance report to public testimony, financial discussions, fundraising reports, and the update on the state legislature and the FY17 budget.

President Jim Johnsen emphasized that the framework provides the jumping off point for many future meetings and discussions with university staff, faculty, students and the community at large. “It is not a done deal,” he said, “it is just the beginning of a process that will take months and years to implement.”

The proposed framework would allow the university to manage budget reductions while still investing in programs of quality and excellence by realigning resources to a “lead campus” model where each of the main campuses have shared programs in addition to unique programs, research, general education, liberal arts and workforce training programs in accordance with regional needs and the unique strengths of each university.

“We’re not going to cut ourselves down into mediocrity,” Johnsen said. “This plan communicates to the legislature that we aren’t just trying to survive another day. It is not just defense. It is a plan for the next 3-5 years reassuring them that the university is something they can invest in.”

The Strategic Pathways process is going to take some time. President Johnsen told the Regents that as part of the process program decisions, would not be brought to the Board for at least a year following a long lead time allowing for participation from governance groups and stakeholders while still moving quickly on our budget.

“The calendar was built intentionally so we can engage faculty when they are back on campus and able to interact with the process,” he said. “We are going to need faculty and staff and student engagement to make thoughtful recommendations,” said Johnsen. “There’s no doubt, however, that we’re going to need to balance many competing interests over the coming years... what we have to do is keep the needs of the state and our students at the forefront as we weave through this effort.

Students, faculty and even members of the public testified to the Board of Regents with their concerns about the proposal.

“A good university is a full service university, meaning students, faculty and staff have access to a wide range of things - we need an English department, fine arts, physics, sociology. If we take away these things we end up with a technical education, not a university education,” said Dr. David Newman, a UAF physics professor.

Student testimony about preventing sexual violence on campus, providing victim advocates and preventing offenders from being able to harm again was referenced during the Friday afternoon discussion on Title IX. The three university chancellors discussed a newly developed Title IX scorecard, and efforts underway to change policy in order to come into compliance with federal guidelines plus efforts to change campus culture and increase preventative strategies.

“We will never hold institutional reputation higher than doing the right thing for students,” said UAA Chancellor Tom Case.

Making university campuses safer, increasing awareness of reporting channels, and addressing weaknesses in the current system in order to improve response and commitment to victims of sexual violence is a goal not only of the Board of Regents, but of UA leadership across the system.

UAF Police Chief Keith Mallard and student representatives Shaelene Holstrom, Soren Butler and Alec Hajdukovich spoke about UAF's Green Dot bystander training program as the beginning of a concerted effort to change the culture on campuses and to address the serious problem of interpersonal violence.

"We are changing community norms to demonstrate that power based violence isn't going to be ignored, isn't going to be accepted within our community," said Mallard.

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