

August 3, 2016

Dear UA Community,

As many of you are aware, the University is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). At present, we maintain separate accreditations for UAA, UAF and UAS. We have been asked by our state leaders if maintaining three accreditations requires that we have an unnecessarily high number of senior administrators, that is, four administrations (including Statewide) versus one. Earlier this summer we began a process to consider whether three separate accreditations or one single accreditation would allow us to best serve our state.

The process started with an initial meeting that Vice President White and I had with the President of NWCCU, Dr. Sandra Elman, to better understand the options. As a next step, I invited Dr. Elman to Alaska to meet with the university chancellors, provosts, Statewide Vice Presidents and the Alaska Public Higher Education Roundtable.

A great deal of accreditation is having a mission and meeting it. Because accreditation review is performed by a peer group, and because all Universities are different, there are a limited number of hard and fast rules about what can and can't be done under one accreditation versus three accreditations. In order to better understand what other Universities and systems are doing across our country and particularly in the NWCCU region, I asked former Vice President Dana Thomas to conduct an assessment of three accreditations versus one accreditation for the University of Alaska. That review is now complete and available at <https://www.alaska.edu/research/>.

Dr. Thomas' assessment of the pros and cons of either choice will contribute to the information that I provide to the Board of Regents as part of its deliberation as to whether to remain three separately accredited universities or move towards single accreditation.

The report finds that there are options to consider in lieu of single accreditation that might achieve some of the same outcomes as single accreditation including adopting and implementing a common course catalog, a single transcript, and "more consistent policies and procedures across all of its campuses."

The upcoming September 15 & 16 Board of Regents meeting will include a robust discussion of accreditation, including a discussion of Dr. Thomas' report.

I would encourage your input on one vs. three accreditations for the University of Alaska. Please send your comments to Vice President White at dmwhite@alaska.edu, or complete this anonymous form. The link to the form will also be available at <https://www.alaska.edu/research/>.

Thank you,
Jim Johnsen