

June 24, 2016

Dear Colleagues –

This has been a benchmark week for the University of Alaska. We kicked off the first round of Strategic Pathways (SP) reviews, introduced the UAF interim chancellor candidate to the community, prepared a proposal for the Board of Regents meeting on Monday to complete the UAF engineering building, and we celebrated the summer solstice!

Strategic Pathways: The first sessions of our SP review teams were held in Fairbanks this week to review three academic and four administrative programs. I believe all teams had good, thoughtful, and often spirited discussions that were frank but respectful in nature. The teams will meet again in July, to assess the pros and cons of the most creative and viable options for each program. Final options will be presented to me in August and I will advance my recommendations to the Board of Regents in September. I want to thank you all who participated for the time, energy, perspective, and commitment to the university. We made a great start on identifying problems and brainstorming options for the future. This is a critical step in working toward building an even greater university, ever more capable of meeting the state's many needs — access to opportunity, workforce development, research, and economic development and diversification – in the years ahead. Ongoing updates can be found at www.alaska.edu/pathways

UAF Interim Chancellor: A public forum was held this week to introduce or reacquaint Dr. Dana Thomas with the UAF and Fairbanks community. In many respects, Dr. Thomas is very well known to most of us in Fairbanks and needs no introduction. He is a former Vice President of Academic Affairs and Research in the system office and has spent his career at UAF as a professor and academic leader. Yet, these are challenging times in the university's history – from a financial perspective and from a performance perspective. Our state has great needs, so it's critically important that in these tough times we have great leaders. Interim Chancellor Mike Powers has done a great job in leading UAF in very tough times, and I thank him for his vision and leadership. I believe Dr. Thomas is another great leader and is prepared with a vision to take UAF forward for the next 12 months. He and his spouse Kay are ready for the challenges ahead, which were well articulated during the question-and-answer session. If you didn't have the chance to attend the public forum or listen to the webcast it can be found at: <https://uaf-echosystem.uaf.edu:8443/ess/echo/presentation/d1e014c6-eb7e-422c-beb8-d1bae40a6bb8>. Questions asked are at: <http://news.uaf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Forum-questions-pdf.pdf>

UAF Engineering Building: The Facilities and Land Management Committee of the Board of Regents met via teleconference on June 17 and voted 6-0 on a motion to establish a financing package to complete the UAF engineering building. The full board will take up consideration of the motion when it meets Monday, June 27. If adopted, the motion would authorize UA to prepare the necessary documents to issue debt, either via general revenue bonds, a bank loan, or other financing arrangement, or combination to complete the UAF engineering building. The Regents would approve the bond package at their meeting in September.

Regents Meeting: The Board of Regents will hold a special meeting via videoconference on Monday, June 27, from 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. to discuss bonding for the UAF engineering building and to receive an update on the university's FY17 budget. The Live Stream is at: www.alaska.edu/oit/services/video-conferencing/streaming-conferences/

Accreditation Review: In response to a wide variety of questions about what the University can and cannot do organizationally under our current institutional accreditation — in which each university campus is separately accredited — I have commissioned a review of our accreditations. We are working closely with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to complete the review by mid/late July. I look forward to the report and am confident that, once we know, in fact, what the options are, we will be able to determine the path that's in the best interest of our university. An early read is that there is a wide variety of options under either scenario. More on this issue as we learn more next month.

Alaska Public Higher Education Roundtable: This diverse group of Alaskan leaders, co-chaired by Ed Rasmuson of the Rasmuson Foundation and Aaron Schutt of Doyon, Limited, met last week to discuss accreditation, Strategic Pathways, our budget, and our recently completed report on the university's impact on the state's economy, the public's opinions of UA, and views of the university held by about two dozen state leaders. The group expressed strong support for UA's direction, especially our emphasis on partnering with K-12 and employers to build a sustainable and productive people pipeline for Alaska's future. The group will meet next in October to review our progress and suggest next steps.

In closing, I want to thank you all for your hard work and commitment to this great university. From Ketchikan in Southeast to Kotzebue in the Northwest, we are leading our state into the future through your research, teaching, and service.

Hoping you all get a chance to enjoy our beautiful Alaska summer!

Jim