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Dear UA Community –

I write today to share an update on legislative developments affecting our operating budget and action taken by the Board of Regents at its meeting yesterday. First let me thank you for all of your hard work, energy and dedication in communicating to our legislators what this amazing institution means to you and to your future. Your voice has been heard across the state, and in Juneau.

While I'm encouraged by how things are shaping up on our budget in the legislature, I remain very concerned about the governor's proposed \$134 million cut. Sadly, we will not have final results until a budget is passed, sent to the Governor for his consideration, and approved. The legislature is expected to complete its work soon, but it may still be some time before we have our final spending plan. The Governor has indicated that he wants a substantially smaller budget than what may come from the legislature. I continue to communicate with legislative leaders and the administration, but it seems we will have less money to operate with next year.

So even as we continue to advocate for strong public and legislative support, we also strive for efficiencies and improvement. In recognition of the legislature's request that we evaluate our structure, the Board of Regents voted yesterday to establish a special task force to review and suggest improvements to UA's structure.

In suggesting the task force, Board Chair John Davies said the Governor and the legislature have strongly encouraged the university to review its structure and to find more efficiencies. "We also recognize that budget tightening will continue for the foreseeable future," he said. "The task force would gather input, be transparent in its process, and look at how best to move the university forward," Davies said. "We can move quickly."

Chair Davies said the task force would assess options for the university's structure using the vision established in UA2040 (www.alaska.edu/ua2040) and the board's strategic goals. The task force will consider options and make recommendations based on priorities such as:

- A more seamless student experience across the UA system; – common calendars, course hours and fee structure;
- A more cost effective administration; and,
- A more efficient and accessible model for delivering academic programs.

The task force, supported by consultants from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), is charged with reporting preliminary recommendations to the board at its September

meeting after which input from students, faculty, staff and the public will be invited prior to any final decision by the Board of Regents.

The University of Alaska has been making difficult changes as state general fund support has been reduced by \$51 million over the last five budget cycles.

Of course, we have been making these hard decisions for more than five years now since the legislature began reducing the amount of state support by some \$51 million. We have eliminated 1,200 staff and faculty, cut 50 programs and downsized administration.

Most recently, the regents made the decision to not seek reaccreditation for programs in the UAA School of Education and to deliver programs to students in Anchorage from UAF and UAS. In addition, earlier this week, the university announced a major redesign and streamlining of human resources system-wide to enhance service and reduce cost.

As we continue to advocate for what we need, we must recognize that budget tightening will continue for the foreseeable future. We are prepared to take our future into our own hands and seek the time it will take to make the necessary changes that will enhance access to high quality and affordable higher education opportunities for all Alaskans.

#SupportUA

Jim Johnsen