



Board of Regents Meet in Fairbanks

Psychology Program Approved

The University of Alaska Board of Regents at its June 21-22 meeting in Fairbanks unanimously approved the first joint doctoral program between the Fairbanks and Anchorage campuses. The new program in clinical-community psychology will have an indigenous emphasis and is a partnership between the departments of psychology at UAF and UAA.

"Together we are truly much greater than the sum of our parts," said Catherine Koverola of UAF, co-director of the collaborative psychology doctoral program along with UAA's Christiane Brems.

Said Brems, "There is tremendous synergy between the two departments. We are opening doors to collaborative research across the state."

Koverola is chair of the Psychology Department at UAF. Brems is co-director of Behavioral Health Research and Services at UAA. Both are psychology professors.

The program will begin accepting students in the fall of 2006. University officials expect 16 students in the first year, with enrollment growing to 48 by the fourth year. Eight graduates are anticipated each year, beginning in the fourth year.

The program aims at equipping doctoral-level professionals with the dual skills of researcher and practitioner to address numerous mental health and behavioral health problems facing Alaska, including substance abuse, suicide and children's mental health. The need for psychologists who are competent to serve in rural, indigenous and multicultural settings is evident in the number recruited by numerous health and social service agencies from Outside, program supporters said.

"The only way to achieve a stable mental health workforce, long-term, is to grow our

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-Christiane Brems, UAA

own," said Karen Perdue, associate vice president for health programs at UA. "This program is long overdue."

In other action items, the board approved:

- A certificate and associate of applied science degree in Construction Trades Technology at UAF
- Post-baccalaureate certificates in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education (pre-kindergarten through third-grade) at UAA
- Two land sales: a 207-acre parcel at Lunch Creek in Ketchikan for recreational purposes; and a three-acre parcel in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley for a power line easement.

Board Approves Budget Distributions

The board approved the official distribution of the capital and operating budget, following adjournment of the special legislative session.

While UA received a \$17 million increase in state general funds over the FY 04-05 fiscal year, the amount was \$2.5 million below the university's maintenance level needs. The shortfall will be handled through internal budget reallocations and cost saving measures, but leaves little room for program growth.

Board members, President Hamilton and other university officials discussed options for dealing with escalating operating and capital needs. There is growing agreement that next year's request for state funds will be, out of necessity, larger than the \$17 million increment approved this year.

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The University of Alaska Board of Regents is the governing body responsible for the university policy and management through the president. Regents are appointed by the governor for eight-year terms, subject to legislative confirmation.

A student regent is appointed for two years from candidates nominated on each campus. (Regents' term of office shown in parentheses.)

New Hire ORP Contribution capped at 12 percent

The board at the June meeting unanimously approved creating new provisions in the Optional Retirement Program for new hires after June 30. The new ORP, which like the current ORP will be an option in lieu of joining the Public Employees' Retirement System or Teachers Retirement System (PERS/TRS), will have an employer contribution rate of 12 percent. That's the rate the Legislature established for the new PERS/TRS tier effective next year.

The current ORP has an employer contribution rate of 13 percent and is tied to a rolling, three-year average of the TRS rate. The employer contribution rate is scheduled to increase to 16.33 percent in the coming year.

The new ORP rate is an effort to "reduce the bleeding" of escalating retirement obligations in the future, said Brian Rogers, chairman of the Board of Regents.

"The university took extraordinary steps, by creating the first ORP 15 years ago, to contain retirement costs and increase the university's competitive position in the national labor market," Rogers said. "The new ORP provisions are a similar step toward cost containment and market competitiveness. The board is not reducing any benefits for any current employees, regardless of whether they are members of TRS, PERS, or the ORP."

The board's motion said future modifications to ORP would be considered in consultation with affected faculty and staff and could include such items as:

- a retirement health-care option
- options relating to the university pension
- opening eligibility requirements
- incentives for participation
- vesting
- and a continued effort to clarify state statutes regarding the Optional Retirement Plan.

Rogers noted the larger dilemma confronting PERS/TRS, which faces an estimated \$5.7 billion deficit, is a complicated issue that state lawmakers must resolve. "Fully funding the retirement systems is a state responsibility, and one that cannot be fixed by the university acting on its own," Rogers said. "The university is doing all it can to contain future costs."

Name Change OK'd

The board unanimously approved changing the name of the College of Rural Alaska, under UAF, to the College of Rural and Community Development.

The change is the result of a two-year effort to identify a name that more accurately reflects the broad mission of the college, which includes the urban Tanana Valley Campus, rural sites and the Cooperative Extension Service.

Karen Polley Honored

The board approved a resolution honoring Karen Polley, who recently retired after serving UAS as dean of Career and Vocational Programs and director of the Ketchikan Campus. The resolution cites Polly's 36 years of public service to expand and enhance vocational education across the state for secondary and college students, as well as her efforts to bring the Robertson-Hamilton building remodel to completion. The resolution also notes Polley for creating a positive learning environment at the Ketchikan Campus.

Making Students Count



Mary Gower, left, Statewide Student Services Manager, and Cody Bennett, right, a Help Desk consultant at UAS, pause for the camera with President Hamilton after receiving the 7th Annual "Make Students Count" Award. Photo by Kate Ripley © 2005 University of Alaska

Awards Presented

Four UA employees received the annual Make Students Count Award: Mary Gower, statewide manager of student services; Cody Bennett, a Help Desk consultant at UAS in Juneau; Robin Burdick, a clerk at the Mat-Su College bookstore; and Gail Staudinger, an administrative assistant at UAF's College of Rural and Community Development.

In addition, on behalf of the university, UA President Mark Hamilton accepted a 5 Star Award from the state's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Committee, which recognizes and supports employers who keep Guard and Reserve employees on the job.

Future Board Meetings

September 20-21, 2005
Anchorage

November 1, 2005
Fairbanks
