



From the Save the Seawolf Committee

Save the Seawolf!

Ten Elevator Speeches to Save the Seawolf.

Our efforts to save the Seawolf cannot succeed without broad public support. This will not come unless we can educate the people of Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska about the threat the extinction of the Seawolf poses to them. Here are ten “elevator speeches,” talking points you can drive home to someone in thirty seconds or less.

1, Playing Chicken with accreditation. Accreditation is what makes a degree from any university worth having (and allows students to receive federal aid). UAA and UAS would lose their accreditation under the president’s plan, but there’s no guarantee that our accreditors would approve collapsing everything under UAF. If not, the whole system goes dark.

2, We got three years, let’s take three years. The “budget compact” with the governor gives us three years to absorb a \$70 million cut. Why do we need to complete restructuring in one year (the president’s plan) without any analysis, planning, or consideration of other options? Time is a precious gift, we should use it.

3, A “new UA” will offer less access to Anchorage students. If the three universities collapse into UAF they’ll do so under its accreditation. UAF is not an open access university like UAA. So even if all programs, faculty and classes stayed in Anchorage, many of our students would lose access to them.

4, The redundant capacity myth. It’s true, there are two Colleges of Engineering, Business Schools, and other programs at all three universities. But to call them redundant is the same as saying “our town already has one restaurant, how can we possibly maintain another?” You vary the menus! UAF CoE and UAA CoE have different specialties (as do their business schools). Even programs like biology and English focus on different things.

5, Where is the redundancy, it’s that fourth person in Fairbanks. If you’re going to deliver services in three locations, odds are, you’re going to need people in all three locations to deliver them. So the redundant element is the fourth highly paid administrator in Fairbanks who tells the three people what to do instead of letting them work it out between themselves.

6, A “consortium model” just works better. This is why a consortium model works better. UAF, UAA and UAS get to maintain their local characters but the three cooperate without someone in Fairbanks always telling them how to do it. Decisions are made by the chancellors who know their institutions and their communities and can make better decisions about how to do what’s best for them.

7, President Johnsen’s change model. Since 2017 President Jim Johnsen has established a clear preference for a model of change which is ill-conceived, ill-advised, ill-timed, ill-executed, all in pursuit of an inferior product and which does not save money if it accomplishes anything at all. That’s what strategic pathways yielded, that’s what happened with the destruction of UAA’s College of Education, and that’s what will happen under his merger proposal.

8, There is no UA! The organization President Johnsen heads is called UA but is not a university. It has no accreditation, teaches no students, and conducts no research. It is a purely administrative entity and it costs \$52 million a year (more than UAS).

9, There is no precedent for such a merger. There has never been an attempt to merge three universities so far apart (on the order of Seattle, Portland, and Salt Lake City). There has never been a merger where the smaller, less efficient institution (UAF) gobbled up the larger, more efficient one (UAA). The merger of institutions is expensive, usually requiring heavy increases in funding. We're trying this when our funds are decreasing.

10, In order to save the Seawolf, we might have to Free the Seawolf! President Johnsen and a majority of the Board of Regents have displayed an attitude to UAA of consistent hostility while at the same time showing little to no understanding of the value we deliver to the people of Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska. In order for those people to have access to a full service institution of higher education there may be no choice but to go our own way. Have the legislature make us Alaska State University and grant us independence from UA and the Board of Regents.