Dear Legislator:

Any plan for restructuring higher education in Alaska must put students first.

A critical assumption of UA President Jim Johnsen’s proposal for consolidation into a single accredited university will be that students will simply follow the programs or complete their studies via distance. The data on students coming to UAA proves this is not true.

Data from the university’s institutional research site indicates that of the 2115 students who were admitted to UAA and chose to attend in the fall of 2018, 1830 -- almost 87% -- came from Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska. One hundred and thirty-three (about 6%) came from interior or northern Alaska, seventy-eight (about 4%) from Southeast Alaska, sixty from western Alaska (about 3%) and fourteen from the Aleutians (.6%). Just as with UAF and UAS the student body of UAA is primarily composed of residents of the community in which they are based.

A far more telling set of statistics comes when we look at the 1444 students who were admitted to UAA in fall of 2018 and chose *not* to attend. Of those, 158 went to UAF, 152 went to UAS, 9 went to Alaska Pacific University (APU), while 703 elected to attend school out of state. That leaves a staggering 522 students who did not attend an institution of higher education at all.

So, for the bulk of students contemplating attending UAA their primary fallback plan is either to go out of state, or not attend college at all. One of the factors contributing to this phenomenon is that UAA students work at higher rates than any other student body in the nation. The proposed “new UA” would channel most academic and specialty programs to Fairbanks. However, the jobs that UAA students depend upon will not move with them.

Far more problematic, if the “new UA is built by absorbing UAA and UAS into UAF, the president’s preferred method, then the “new UA” is simply a super UAF. It will have the same mission, and admission standards, of UAF. Which means that even if every faculty member and every class currently taught in Anchorage were left in place (a very *big* if) the end of UAA’s open admissions policy would mean that many Anchorage and Southcentral residents taking classes at UAA would not be able to do so!

We hope you will tell the regents that the people of Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska must not be denied access to a full-service institution of higher education. You can contact the members of the Board directly or you can testify during the public comment session scheduled to take place September 9. More information is available at savetheseawolf.com.

We thank you for your service to the people of Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska. We deeply appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely

Save the Seawolf Committee