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Dear Chair Davies, Members of the University of Alaska Board of Regents, and University of Alaska Chancellors:

I write to share the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities' (NWCCU) support for the students of Alaska and to express my continued concern as to the ongoing efforts to respond to the funding challenges faced by the state's institutions of higher learning.

In previous correspondence, we have shared the critical importance of properly supporting the work of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Alaska Anchorage, and University of Alaska Southeast in honoring its commitment to students, and for each of the independently accredited institutions and the System and Board to find ways to address the funding challenges in a way that is inclusive, transparent, and participatory for constituents.

While NWCCU remains concerned about the long-term consequences of reduced funding as it relates to student learning and educational attainment, today I write based on NWCCU Senior Vice President Mac Powell's on-the-ground observations developed during the last several days of interactions with the myriad stakeholders in Fairbanks and concerns related to the governance of the state's independently accredited institutions.

As Dr. Powell shared during his visit to Fairbanks on September 22nd and 23rd in public forums and individual meetings, NWCCU Standards require that *"In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered"* (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.2). "

In addition, NWCCU Standards require that “*The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest*” (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.1).”

In reviewing recent media coverage and based upon the feedback from stakeholders, we are concerned that the University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Alaska Anchorage, and University of Alaska Southeast have failed to meet the above critical Standards for Accreditation, in accordance with the United States Department of Education’s 34 CFR Part 602.

We respectfully urge you to take immediate steps to provide clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership.

We also respectfully urge you to continue to create a space for *inclusive dialogue* as the Board of Regents deliberates on the future structure of the University of Alaska System.

NWCCU continues to assert the importance of the Board of Regents as an independent governing body, and respects that Board’s ultimate authority related to the structure and future structure of the University of Alaska System. However, we also must assert the importance of an inclusive decision-making process that respects the tenets of shared governance in the process.

We ask that you take immediate action, and that the institutions report either collectively or individually to the Commission on the results of your efforts in an Ad Hoc report, no later than October 31, 2019.

Please note that NWCCU will continue to support your efforts to deal with the financial situation faced by the institutions of higher learning in Alaska.

Sincerely,



Sonny Ramaswamy
President