

September 10, 2019

University of Alaska Board of Regents
Via email to: ua-bor@alaska.edu and all Regents individually

Re: UA Restructuring

Subj: Single accreditation

Dear Regents,

The single accreditation concept is a very risky long shot and should be taken off the table. The Regent's duty of care requires an earnest search for a less disruptive way to improve efficiency.

The justification of the single accreditation model remains unanswered.

- What happened to the Strategic Pathways philosophy "We are one and we are three"? Why is it now urgent to abandon the foundation of the entire Strategic Pathways process?
- What metrics have been used to choose single accreditation?
- Where are the proven case histories where this has been done successfully and it saved money?
- Where is a successful example of merging a State's largest university into one smaller? (There isn't one)
- Where is a successful example of merging universities over such a large geographic area? (There isn't one.)
- Where is the evidence that such an aggressive consolidation of accreditations can be accomplished in a year? (There isn't any.)
- Why should we believe that consolidating colleges will be less disruptive than the experience with the College of Education? Since 2016, the combined AKCOE Fall Enrollment of Declared Majors is down 37% statewide.
- Why is it prudent to confuse and frighten students with the uncertainties of reaccreditation?
- Why is it prudent to excite the public, who bristle at any news of shuffling accreditations?
- Why should faculty and staff be dragged through another multiyear gauntlet? Strategic Pathways took three years of great anxiety, resulting in the exodus of many fine professors. Enrollment is down over 15% since 2015, presumably reflecting that anxiety.
- How would single accreditation improve opportunities for local growth and initiative?
- Where is the assurance that enrollment, partnerships, and fundraising will not be negatively impacted?

Single accreditation would throw at least two MAUs into years of confusion. Currently UAF is research focused (selective enrollment), UAA is an urban/metropolitan comprehensive large campus (open enrollment), and UAS is small liberal arts and teaching focused (open enrollment). Forcing a switch of all institutions to any of these three distinct missions would be traumatic for the other two and would restrict the range of offerings to the citizens of Alaska.

If the single accreditation goal is a long term solution into the 22nd century, then an all new accreditation would be needed. This would include focused research, open access statewide, and multiple campuses including at Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and other communities. Getting there would take years and be very costly and disruptive. How does that help now?

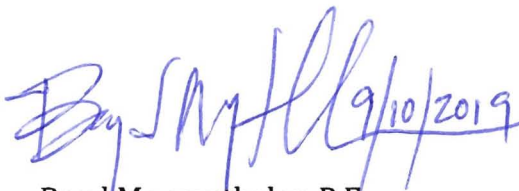
The rhyme of history

This reminds me of the debate over central heating plants (like at UAF & Chena Hot Springs) versus a diversified system with heating plants at each building (like in Anchorage and Juneau). Central heating works when all the buildings are close together and there is a large nearby source of low cost heat. But the central heating model falls short as the service area increases. This is why most Alaskan buildings have their own heating system. In fact, when the UAA campus was built in the 1970's it was specified by the design office in Fairbanks to include central heating. That was installed but ultimately failed with a large subsequent cost to convert to a diversified system

Single accreditation and centralization is like central heating: It is inflexible and has definite limitations. This is why we have multiple accreditations.

Please reject the single accreditation model. And please postpone your decision about UA Structure until the other alternatives are dispassionately analyzed.

Best Regards,



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