

ACADEMIC PROGRAM PRIORITIES & PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

I. UAS MISSION AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Academic program priorities at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) are developed in alignment with the UA system's *Shaping Alaska's Future* initiative, the UAS *Strategic and Assessment Plan*, industry data and workforce development plans, and broad input at the local, regional, and statewide levels. Program priorities are impacted by available resources, including state general fund dollars, state and federal grants, corporate and private giving, and other factors.

The five themes of *Shaping Alaska's Future* fit well with our UAS mission:

Student learning enhanced by faculty scholarship, undergraduate research and creative activities, community engagement, and the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska.

This mission provides the framework for four core themes identified as part of our regional accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Those four core themes and associated objectives are:

- **Student Success:** Provide the academic support and student services that facilitate student access and completion of educational goals
- **Teaching and Learning:** Provide a broad range of programs and services resulting in student engagement and empowerment for academic excellence
- **Community Engagement:** Provide programs and services that connect with local, state, national, and international entities; provide services that respond to the economic, environmental, social, and cultural needs and resources of Southeast Alaska
- **Research and Creative Expression:** Provide programs and services that support research, scholarship, and creative expression by faculty and students

UAS is a regional university of 3,000 students with three interrelated campuses: Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka. Its academic priorities are shaped to a significant degree by the communities we serve, the environment we're a part of, needs of our diverse student population, and dynamic employment needs of our region. The beautiful Juneau Campus offers a student-focused campus-based experience in a world-class setting. The UAS Ketchikan and Sitka campuses offer both workforce and academic programs meeting local and regional needs. They are also important contributors to online degree programs offered by UAS across all of Alaska. Importantly, a majority of our UAS students are non-traditional, with family and work obligations. The average age is 29. Most are 'place-bound'—their family and work obligations make it much more difficult to move to a distant campus to complete a degree program.

As part of the UA system, UAS also offers distinctive academic programs of high quality that meet statewide needs, especially in education and workforce development. UAS has a long history of providing quality online degree programs—reaching primarily non-traditional students who are located in communities across the state as well as in many Lower 48 locations.

II. OVERVIEW OF UAS ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

The following list highlights selected academic priorities at our three UAS campuses:

- **TEACHER EDUCATION & EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

UAS has long been recognized as a leader statewide in producing quality teachers and educational leaders. Programs focus on elementary, secondary, special education, reading, educational technology, mathematics, and science education. Our highly-successful one-year Master of Arts in Teaching program enables those who've completed baccalaureate degrees in disciplines outside of the field of education to enter the classroom following a rigorous six-week summer intensive. UAS also offers educational leadership programs leading to required professional credentials for principals and superintendents. Our university cooperates closely with UAA and UAF education programs to align degree offerings and support student success system-wide.

- **MARINE BIOLOGY, BIOLOGY, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, AND FISHERIES TECHNOLOGY**

UAS offers world-class opportunities to study marine biology, fisheries, and environmental sciences given our location in Southeast Alaska—with an economy based heavily on fisheries, forestry resources, and tourism. Undergraduate students have exceptional opportunities for field-based research, internships, and practicum experiences—leading to job opportunities with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, NOAA, local mining companies, and the fishing industry.

- **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: ONLINE DEGREES FOR ALL ALASKA**

With its home base in Alaska's capital, UAS has long produced graduates in accounting, business administration, human resources, and marketing who have gone to work in regional businesses and in local, state, federal, and tribal governments. These graduates make up nearly 45 percent of all UAS graduates. Importantly, most of the UAS business degree programs are available entirely online—meeting the needs of non-traditional students. Most of these students, located in communities from Ketchikan to Bethel to Kotzebue—are working and have family obligations. Online degree programs are the only way that they can finish college. UAS also has a robust and growing Master's degree program in Public Administration. This online program is sought after by busy non-traditional students: city managers, police officers, tribal health employees, and more.

- **BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN ARTS AND SCIENCES: CAMPUS-BASED AND ONLINE**

UAS offers exceptional campus-based Bachelor's degree offerings in social sciences and liberal arts. Anchored by the new freshman housing on the UAS Juneau Campus, this degree incorporates the breadth of general education requirements with depth in humanities, social sciences, Alaska Native and indigenous cultures and languages, math, and natural sciences. These baccalaureate degrees are one of the hallmarks of a UAS education: an interdisciplinary program of study, talented faculty, and rich and diverse learning experiences. These Bachelor's degrees, taught by faculty at all three UAS campuses, are also available online, enabling non-traditional students to return to college and complete their degree.

- **CAREER EDUCATION: MEETING THE DISTINCTIVE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA**

UAS prides itself on meeting the high-demand workforce needs of our region: fisheries, seafood, and maritime industries; mining and diesel technology; maritime and multi-skilled worker; allied health and health information management; welding and construction technology. UAS works closely with Southeast Conference, Juneau Economic Development Council, and employers like Hecla/Greens Creek Mine, SEARHC, PeaceHealth, and Vigor Industrial to ensure that our graduates are positioned for competitive jobs.

III. STUDENT SUCCESS PRIORITIES

Academic priorities alone do not guarantee student success. Highly-responsive student and business services, mandatory student advising, opportunities for field-based and experiential learning with talented faculty, abundant campus life opportunities, and a quality learning community—whether on campus or online—all contribute importantly to student success. As part of its community college mission, UAS is committed to meeting the needs of first-generation students, veterans, and those with special needs and disabilities.

IV. UAS STRATEGIC PLANNING & BUDGETING PROCESS

Identifying academic priorities and measuring educational outcomes at UAS takes place at many levels, but overall it is guided by our UAS Strategic and Assessment Plan—the foundation for decision-making and resource allocation at UAS. A Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (SPBAC) made up of faculty, staff, students, and administrators review performance data and strategic priorities and then provide budget recommendations to the Chancellor. Deans and campus directors work closely with faculty and with employers of our graduates to ensure that our curriculum meets identified needs. The Provost works with the Chancellor and our employer and campus advisory committees to align our curriculum with workforce needs and career opportunities.

More specifically, the charge of the SPBAC committee is to:

- Provide overall advice to UAS leadership about implementation of the UAS Strategic and Assessment Plan (SAP), including our mission, vision, and core themes
- Provide oversight for NWCCU accreditation compliance and report preparation
- Provide recommendations about continuous improvement and refinement of UAS's planning and budgeting processes in light of the SAP
- Advise UAS leadership about budget principles, priorities, and allocation criteria that guide annual resource allocation decisions as well as allocation and utilization of facilities and technology-related resources
- Review and present input to UAS leadership about annual operating and capital budget requests
- Promote transparency and accountability in our planning and budget processes, and assist with communication about those processes and outcomes to the broader university community
- Promote meaningful participation by appropriate university governance groups in the UAS strategic planning and budgeting process.

The SPBAC committee provides a setting where deans and directors, representatives of students, faculty, and staff, and university administrators examine budgetary challenges and strategic opportunities—including ideas for enhancing revenue, reducing budgets, and realigning priorities in light of our changing budget environment. In addition, UAS faculty, campus directors, and other administrators work closely with local employers and industry/campus advisory committees to align our curriculum with workforce needs and career opportunities.

V. UAS ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

UAS conducts regular program reviews of all its academic programs in line with UA Board of Regents policy and university regulation. These comprehensive and periodic reviews are necessary to evaluate policies, procedures, and programs and services of the institution. The purpose of the periodic reviews is to facilitate improvement of programs and services, and thereby, the overall strength and reputation of UAS. Through

curricular changes, program reviews serve the purpose of attainment of strategic plan goals and meeting the needs of students, faculty, and the mission of the university. Through quality self-assessment, these reviews contribute to the attainment of strategic plan goals and the academic strength of the University's educational mission. They also help UAS meet the changing needs of the institution and the students it serves.

At the present time, academic program reviews are conducted at least every five years. Special program reviews may also be conducted as the need arises. One such review is that of the William A. Egan Library and its regional services. These reviews begin with program data and a faculty assessment of program strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This assessment is then reviewed by an Institutional Review Committee made up of faculty, others in the university, and community members/employers/industry representatives. The Committee's assessment is reviewed by the dean and/or director and then by the Provost. The Provost, with the support of the Chancellor, makes findings that then become the basis for the program's future. These findings may include decisions to enhance high-performing degrees, continue with existing resources, make major adjustments or changes, or move toward program elimination.

A summary of recent UAS Academic Program Review actions and outcomes is included as Appendix A. Details about the UAS Academic Program Review process can be found on the web at: http://www.uas.alaska.edu/provost/program_review.html

VI. REVIEW OF NON-ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In recent years UAS has undertaken a thorough review of selected non-academic programs and services. These reviews of non-academic programs broadly mirror those for academic programs. They involve a careful review of available data, an assessment of how the program/service aligns with *Shaping Alaska's Future* and our UAS Strategic and Assessment Plan, and a public process to invite input from members of the university and wider community.

Recent review of campus facilities, including buildings and space allocation, include:

- **Bill Ray Center Sale:** The UAS Master Planning process broadly reviewed the facilities across the entire UAS region. One strategy identified in this review process was to reduce the number of satellite buildings in the UAS inventory such as the Bill Ray Center and the Natural Sciences Research Laboratory. As an outcome, UAS has already sold the Bill Ray Center, reducing operational costs and improving efficiency. Other buildings are being reviewed now for possible sale.
- **Ketchikan Campus--Facilities Improvements to Enhance Maritime Training:** Working with Vigor Industries and the Alaska Ship and Drydock Company, the Ketchikan Campus is involved with much-needed facilities improvements that will expand its capacity to offer the Maritime and Multi-skilled Worker program. Funding for this project comes from federal Title III programs designed to strengthen Alaska Native-serving institutions.
- **Juneau Auke Lake Campus Space Utilization:** With the Bill Ray Center sale, the computer lab closures, and the necessity to replace building mechanical systems in two buildings, UAS conducted a comprehensive review of how space could best be used throughout the Auke Lake campus. This review involved multiple stakeholder groups and was based on the UAS Master Plan. The analysis focused on strategies for creating a more efficient, functional and navigable campus. Decisions based on this review include repurposing multiple existing buildings, establishing space standards, and more efficiently co-locating campus functions. These decisions are allowing UAS to improve the campus while increasing efficiencies while reducing staffing and operating costs and potentially the number of buildings.
- **Juneau Core Campus: Freshman Housing and Food Service Changes:** The Campus Master Planning Update process led to a decision to construct the Freshman Residence Hall on the core Auke Lake campus (closer to the dining hall and classrooms) rather than in the housing complex (three-quarters of a mile away). The food service contract with NANA was ended after a review in the normal course of

business. Together the decision to construct the residence hall on campus and in-source dining services have improved campus life and will most likely help UAS sustain the recent increase we have had in first-time freshman retention. Student Services also reviewed and ended a contract with a local security firm at the end of FY14. During the fall of 2014 Juneau Police Department opened a substation on campus in accordance with a new MOU between the City and Borough of Juneau and UAS.

Recent examples of non-academic (administrative) program reviews include:

- **UAS Juneau Campus Bookstore:** A careful review of costs and benefits of the Juneau-based bookstore made clear that the business model required ongoing subsidies that were unsustainable. A decision was made to transition into a different model—one employing online book purchasing and a transition to selling other bookstore goods elsewhere on campus. This finding was implemented in 2014 when the bookstore facility was closed and online services were implemented.
- **Juneau Campus Academic Technology:** Having innovated for more than a dozen years in the area of mobile technologies and universal access, UAS carefully reviewed student use of traditional computer labs in light of the growing popularity of smart phones, tablet computers and similar devices. The decision was made to decommission computer labs on the Juneau campus and create a classroom technology support desk more closely aligned to the primary instructional spaces. In so doing, UAS supports student learning throughout all campus spaces while increasing organizational efficiency.

Further reviews of non-academic programs are currently underway, including UAS media services and advising services. Facilities reviews are being conducted on the Administration buildings and the Natural Sciences Research Lab, and UAS is planning to eliminate several small houses in the upcoming year. These reviews are designed to ensure quality program offerings, examine program alignment with our UAS mission, measure outcomes, and make recommendations about the future.