

University of Alaska Southeast

Strategic Priorities 2015-17

UAS MISSION

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

UAS VISION

The University of Alaska Southeast is recognized as a destination of choice for students seeking excellent academic programs and engaging learning opportunities that integrate the environment and cultures of Southeast Alaska

BACKGROUND

The following UAS strategic priorities are intended to guide implementation of our UAS mission and core themes in the period from 2015-2017. This is a living, dynamic document that will be updated over time. The priorities are an outcome of a process involving faculty, staff, and administrative leaders from our three campuses who met in an August 2015 retreat to review the current mission, vision, and core themes. The retreat was facilitated by McDowell Group principal Susan Bell. Subsequent input was invited from UAS leadership, governance groups, and individuals. The priorities are also informed by community insights from retreat presenters Representative Cathy Muñoz, Sealaska CEO Anthony Mallott, Juneau Economic Development Council Executive Director Brian Holst, and Professor Emeritus Jason Ohler. Four students provided undergraduate and graduate perspectives.

This document summarizes the outcome of the retreat and subsequent input received from governance groups and individuals. Included with the priorities are yearly action steps for implementation. These will be updated over time as action steps are completed and new steps are identified.

REAFFIRMING MISSION & COMMITMENT TO EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

In general, UAS' mission, vision, and core themes—developed over five years ago—appear to enjoy continuing support across the university community. During the retreat some participants proposed changes to the mission that would broaden it—for example, to place greater emphasis on graduate education and/or research. There was discussion about the implications of emphasizing—as the current mission does—the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska as opposed to a more general global emphasis. There was discussion about adding emphasis on the languages of Southeast Alaska in the mission statement. While these ideas generated discussion and may merit further consideration, there was a general sense that the existing mission and core themes serve the institution well without changes at this time.

That said, discussions about these priorities highlight the continuing need and opportunity at UAS to focus on educational equity and inclusiveness. We are committed to a vision and a practice of education that promotes equity and opportunity for all. This includes demonstrating respect for the diverse cultures, languages, and histories represented in Alaska's population. It means reaching out to promote the success of all students, including those who are first generation students, who previously have felt excluded from the university community, and/or who have been typically underrepresented in higher education. It means continuing to expand our curriculum to incorporate knowledge and perspectives reflective of our increasingly diverse world. It means recruiting, hiring, and promoting qualified faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds—faculty and staff who broadly reflect the changing character of the students and the communities that we serve.

SUMMARY OF 2015-17 PRIORITIES

The following are strategic priorities identified through this process, listed in no particular order:

- Increase enrollment and retention through strategic marketing and enrollment management
- Review and improve UAS information technology programs and services
- Expand faculty support in instructional design and technology-enhanced learning
- Enhance UAS learning communities and high impact learning opportunities
- Encourage and enhance diversity in employment practices and in our curriculum
- Strengthen university safety practices and emergency readiness

PRIORITIES AND ACTION STEPS

• Increase enrollment & retention through strategic marketing and enrollment management

In the face of enrollment declines and budgetary challenges, UAS needs to redouble its efforts to increase enrollment and retention. This requires alignment of recruitment activities for students of all types and even greater attention to effective enrollment management tools and techniques. We need to be smarter and more coordinated in telling our UAS story, highlighting what is distinctive about our university, and using all appropriate tools for data-informed recruitment and marketing. We need to identify and reach out to sub-groups of prospective students who can benefit from what UAS has to offer. Recruitment efforts need to be more connected with deans, campus directors, and faculty. External consultants and further investment may be needed to employ social media and other recruitment and marketing tools. Once students are enrolled we need to retain them at a higher rate through ensuring course availability and through engaged advising and student services.

Action steps, AY15-16:

- Convene a UAS Strategic Recruitment and Marketing Workshop in October 2015. Employ *Strategies360* firm to assist with meeting facilitation and identification next steps.
- Consider new marketing investments to implement recruitment/marketing strategies; assess outcomes
- Working with Institutional Effectiveness staff, analyze data to determine how to strengthen retention
- Use Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Native Education to identify steps for increasing enrollments of Alaska Native students and developing more effective retention and student success strategies
- Revisit UAS staffing, coordination, and engagement for effective strategic recruitment and marketing to ensure broader engagement across schools and campuses
- Emphasize respect for diversity and equity in marketing, recruitment, and training—to include issues of gender diversity, race and ethnicity, and an understanding of the history of place.

• Review and improve UAS information technology programs and services

A fresh look at our UAS information technology (IT) infrastructure and services is needed. A robust IT platform for instructional and administrative services is essential to fulfilling our mission. While UAS has been innovative in its use of technologies over time, IT systems and services along with pedagogies of technology-enhanced learning are changing rapidly. Inequities continue to exist in how distant students access our online services. IT has been the subject of budgetary reductions leading to reduced services. Retreat participants believe that UAS would be wise

to take a careful look at existing technologies and services as well as those on the horizon to position the institution for leadership in this area in coming years, especially given the prominence of online degree programs.

Action steps, AY15-16:

- Invite an external review of our current IT programs, services, and infrastructure—informed by the survey and focus groups above—to make recommendations about improvements
- Engage UAS community in a survey of existing IT programs and services along with use of focus groups to identify areas of strength and those needing improvement
- Develop implementation plans including milestones and budget implications no later than Fall 2016

● **Expand faculty support in instructional design & technology-enhanced learning**

To continue as a leader in Alaska in online and technology-enhanced learning, UAS needs to enhance resources supporting faculty in instructional design and technology-enhanced learning for both classroom-based and online instruction. Faculty skills with these tools and techniques vary considerably, and yet faculty express a strong desire to implement best practices and new approaches and techniques (e.g. peer review). A new Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) is proposed to provide faculty training (e.g. iTeach) and readily-available instructional design support. Attention should be given to the needs of both faculty and staff.

Action steps, AY15-16:

- Create a regionally-focused UAS Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) with positions and resources located at all three UAS campuses; begin implementation in Spring 2016
- Identify faculty and staff champions on each campus to guide CELT services and training

● **Enhance UAS learning communities & high impact learning opportunities**

To be a destination of choice of new students of all types, UAS needs to offer inviting and engaging learning environments—both in campus-based and online environments. This includes offering a supportive and enriching array of campus life activities and services on the Juneau Campus—with its housing, food service, and campus-based clubs and activities. It is also important at the Ketchikan and Sitka campuses and online—ensuring that UAS is known across Alaska and beyond as providing an academically challenging and richly rewarding student learning environment. We should use insights from academic program reviews, regular program assessments, the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Native Education, the Diversity Action Committee, and other entities to ensure effectiveness in creating opportunities that address diverse learning styles and needs.

Action steps, AY15-16:

- Continue improvements in data-informed program assessment and academic program review processes to design and enhance current and proposed offerings
- Market successes in enhancing learning communities and in high impact learning opportunities—internships, practicum experiences, career advising, support services, & academic advising
- Explore national best practices such as LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) and course redesign for faculty-led improvements to liberal education at UAS
- Set a goal of providing high impact learning opportunities whether on campuses or online, including a focus on interdisciplinary degree options for students. Identify barriers to increased student participation and explore ways in which student leadership and campus life activities can be incorporated into opportunities for earning academic credit
- Engage deans, directors, and faculty in development efforts to support funding for high impact learning

● **Encourage and enhance diversity in employment practices and in our curriculum**

All UAS students benefit from higher education that opens their eyes to our increasingly diverse world. Achieving

this goal is strongly associated with having a diverse university community—faculty, staff, students, administrators. Meeting these expectations also requires expanded faculty engagement in ensuring that our curriculum reflects diverse histories, languages, cultures, and perspectives.

Action steps, AY15-16:

- Enhance HR services in education and training that promote fulfillment of BOR policies and regulation relating to diversity and equal opportunity employment
- Seek Diversity Action Committee and HR recommendations about improvements to existing UAS practices in recruitment, hiring, and retention of diverse faculty and staff members; begin implementation Spring 16
- Invite ideas from Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Native education and others about steps that faculty can take to reflect diverse perspectives in our curriculum
- Support faculty conversations about continuing to reflect diverse perspectives in our curriculum

● **Strengthen university safety practices & emergency readiness**

This priority was not discussed at the August 2015 Retreat but has been added in recognition that UAS has work to do in strengthening safety and emergency readiness. Board of Regents policy requires that each university have crisis response, communications, and business continuation plans. These plans must include provisions for prompt and effective response to disasters and crisis situations to protect life and property. UAS needs to continue improvements to its Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), working through a revitalized safety and emergency readiness coordinating committee. UAS needs to review its EOP for each campus on a regular basis, provide appropriate training and crisis response education to faculty, staff, and students, and conduct tests and drills of response systems.

Action steps, AY15-16:

- Update existing EOP for each campus and provide appropriate education and training
- Hire an UAS Emergency Management Planner to coordinate all UAS emergency preparedness activities
- Revitalize a safety and emergency readiness coordinating committee with a new charge and membership
- Implement appropriate recommendations from campus leadership and the committee regarding safety and emergency preparedness, including identification of needed resources