

Interim Progress Report
to the
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Colleges and Universities
from the
University of Alaska Southeast

October, 2002

Introduction

The report of the Commission's Full Scale Evaluation Committee, based on its October 12 – 15, 1999 visit to the University of Alaska Southeast, documented the university's successful transition from three separate, independent units into one comprehensive regional university serving all of Southeast Alaska. However, the report made four general recommendations, intended to strengthen both the cohesiveness of the institution and its service to the region.

UAS leadership, faculty and staff have studied these recommendations and have taken vigorous action to implement the findings. Over the past two years, the UAS community has engaged in thoughtful consideration of its mission and of the programs, facilities and human and financial resources necessary to carry out that mission in a new century. Action has also been taken on the more specific recommendations made in the body of the report; however, this interim report will address only those steps taken to conform to the general recommendations.

The four recommendations cover three general areas: planning (Recommendation 1 and 4), regional consistency (Recommendation 2) and instructional support (Recommendation 3). Because # 1 and 4 address a concern for comprehensive planning, they will be treated together in this report.

Recommendation 1: The evaluation team endorses the self-study recommendation that the UAS community examine its mission and vision statements in light of evolving conditions and of increased collaboration with the University of Alaska system. The team further recommends that UAS engage in institutional strategic planning to achieve its mission and goals, particularly with respect to suggestions and recommendations concerning fiscal planning, enrollment management, educational program quality, and administrative operations.

Recommendation 4: The evaluation committee recommends that UAS initiate a strategic long-term planning process that is supported by a long-range financial and capital plan.

The committee finding reinforced the conclusion from the self-study that further growth and development of the institution required UAS to understand and respond to changing conditions in its student populations, the university system itself and the regional economy. After a decade of slow but steady student enrollment increases, all three campuses of UAS experienced several years of enrollment declines. After a decade of declining resources, all three campuses received significant infusions of monies through the UA Presidential initiative process. After several decades of relative prosperity, the regional resource-based economy faced substantial contraction and restructuring. These conditions presented UAS with a new operating environment containing new challenges and new opportunities.

At the time of the committee visit, UAS had already recognized the need to reverse the decline in enrollments. With consulting assistance from UAS Group/Noel-Levitz, the university had begun an aggressive enrollment management planning effort designed to raise full-time student enrollment from 605 in Fall, 1999, to 1000 by Fall, 2005. It was immediately recognized that reaching this target had programmatic, spatial and fiscal implications. One of the major goals established in the early enrollment planning sessions was to "Reinvent UAS" by establishing a strong institutional identity and future direction—further support for a large scale planning effort.

Soon after the official receipt of the Evaluation Committee report in November, 1999, Chancellor Pugh and his cabinet began researching various planning models and on February 1, 2000, approved a strategic planning process and timeline. The Dean of Faculty was appointed by the Chancellor to head up the process, with the Executive Cabinet serving as the steering committee. *UAS – The Next Decade* was chosen as the theme for the effort. Both the process and the theme tied the planning effort to the larger

efforts of the University of Alaska system. The process started with the global goals and vision adopted by the UA Board of Regents and “The Next Decade” looked to 2009, the 75th anniversary of the UA system and UA President Hamilton’s strategic planning target.

In March, the Chancellor unveiled *UAS – The Next Decade* to the entire campus community. A description of the planning process, important dates and an invitation to participate were disseminated widely through campus publications and posted on the UAS Website.

Strategic planning involved all campuses and all campus constituencies. During Spring, 2000, planning meetings were held in Sitka and Ketchikan and involved the community as well as staff and faculty. Regional students met in April in Juneau for a student focus group, while regional faculty gathered in May for an all day session. Juneau administrative staff also met in May. In addition to the face-to-face meetings, a Caucus (Web-based) discussion was initiated in April, which engaged additional students, faculty, staff and community members. A June, 2000, progress report was posted on the Web and contained information from all of the events to date. Information from the planning sessions was used to develop the FY 02 regional budget and to prepare requests for additional resources through UA Presidential initiatives and federal grants.

Fall, 2000, Convocation, which involved faculty and administrators from all three campuses, was devoted to further planning, with particular emphasis on revising the UAS mission statement and developing core values. In October, a second Caucus discussion concerning mission was initiated. A January 2001 mini-convocation further refined the mission statement, which was then electronically distributed to the UAS community for review and comment. In February, 2001, the revised mission statement was approved by the UAS Faculty Council and the Campus Community Council. At its March, 2001, meeting the Board of Regents approved the following mission statement:

The University of Alaska Southeast is an open enrollment, public university that provides postsecondary education for a diverse student body. UAS promotes student achievement and faculty scholarship, lifelong learning opportunities, and quality academic programs.

To provide further direction for plans and actions, the University of Alaska Southeast community also adopted the following core values:

- Achieving distinction as a learning community.
- Developing programs and services rooted in its unique natural setting.
- Developing educated citizens with a sense of personal ethics.
- Serving as a center for culture and arts with a focus on Alaska Native traditions.
- Contributing to the economic development of the region and the state through basic and applied research and public service.
- Using technology effectively in all programs and services.
- Forging dynamic partnerships with other academic institutions, governmental agencies and private industry.

On April 2, 2001, the Executive Cabinet approved a draft of the strategic plan, which addressed program, student support and enrollment goals. The Cabinet directed that the plan be posted on the Web for review and comment by the UAS community. Information from the draft plan was used to prepare the FY 03 budget and to request additional state and federal resources through UA Presidential initiatives and grants.

With a draft copy of the strategic plan in place, UAS next addressed the plan’s facility implications. In late Spring, 2001, it commissioned The Cunningham Group and The Saratoga Associates to initiate a

facilities master planning process tied to the strategic plan. In May, facilities planning consultants visited all three campuses to conduct interviews and survey existing facilities. The survey indicated, among other things, a significant lack of adequate space to support the science program goals envisioned by the strategic plan. Therefore, UAS commissioned a more detailed science facilities planning effort, which was conducted during Summer, 2001.

A final review of the strategic plan by regional faculty and campus community councils was conducted in August, 2001. A week-long facilities planning charrette, held in September, 2001, resulted in a draft Facilities Master Plan. Chancellor Pugh used these documents to make a full-scale presentation to UA President Hamilton in November, 2001. The presentation focused on UAS enrollment and program plans through 2009, with related fiscal and facilities implications, and tied the FY 03 operating and capital requests directly to these plans.

The strategic plan and the related Master Facilities Plan were presented to the Board of Regents at the March 2002 meeting. The various programs and departments at UAS are now examining the plan and fleshing out the faculty, staff and other resources needed to achieve the stated goals by 2009. These deliberations will inform requests for state and federal funds in future years.

The events chronicled above indicate that UAS has met the letter and intent of Recommendations 1 and 4. It has developed a functional mission statement, identified core values and set enrollment and programmatic goals. It has used these goals to determine facilities needs and to prepare operational and capital budgets for the past two years. Through these activities, it believes it has fully met the requirements of *Standard 1 – Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness* and of Commission Policy A-8, *Principles and Practices Regarding Institutional Mission and Goals, Policies and Administration*. A full calendar of planning events is attached to this report.

Recommendation 2: “...the evaluation team recommends that UAS examine its procedures and communication practices to ensure that responsibility for curricular matters is properly vested and clearly articulated.”

Chancellor Pugh, in July 1999, reorganized his administrative structure to bring responsibility for all academic matters under the Provost. In his letter to President Hamilton outlining the reorganization, he stated that “[w]hile the extended campus directors will have functional responsibility for academic/vocational and continuing education programs offered by their campus, the academic policy, all faculty matters, and academic program planning and curriculum will be the responsibility of the Provost.” The same memo spells out regional responsibilities for the Dean of Students and the Vice-Chancellor for Administrative Services.

At the time of the evaluation committee’s visit in October of that year, however, both the Sitka and Ketchikan Campus directors reported directly to the Chancellor—a remnant of the political compromise when the independent campuses were merged into the regional structure—giving rise to some confusion as to limits of authority and responsibility.

This confusion was partly addressed when the two extended directorships came open in the Spring of 2000. The position announcement and job description for both positions indicate that the director “is a member of the regional university management team and works directly with UAS Provost on all academic matters, UAS Vice Chancellor on all budget and finance matters, and UAS Dean of Students in student recruitment.” However, the positions continued to report to the Chancellor.

During the same time period (Spring, 2000), UAS was also recruiting for the position of Dean of Faculty for the Juneau campus. After an unsuccessful search, the Chancellor invited faculty to reexamine the

existing academic and faculty governance structure and to make recommendations for change. There was regional consensus that UAS was no longer well served with only one academic dean, particularly in light of the programmatic and enrollment goals that were beginning to emerge from the strategic planning process. Of the several alternatives considered, the move to multiple, regional deans—one for each of the significant program groups identified in the strategic plan—emerged as the most efficient. Also, the existing faculty council structure was deemed less desirable than a return to a faculty senate model, similar to that of the other UA campuses.

After a year of planning, a new academic structure was unveiled in Summer, 2001, which would eventually result in four deans—arts and science, education, career education and business—all with regionwide responsibility for their respective faculty and all reporting to the Provost. Job announcements and descriptions for the positions are very clear in this respect, as indicated by the following quotes:

The Dean of Liberal Arts and Science coordinates the other academic deans and directors of the Sitka and Ketchikan Campuses to ensure institutional integrity of the UAS degrees. The Dean of Liberal Arts and Science is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the university's liberal arts and science program and including coordination of the offerings of all campuses within the framework of the mission and strategic plans for the institution.

The Dean of Education's responsibilities include the Juneau campus, two outreach campuses, and distance students throughout the state and coordination with the other universities in the University of Alaska system. The Dean is on the regional management team with responsibility for the financial management and the academic integrity of all courses, programs, and accreditation of the education programs.

The Dean of Career Education is responsible for the leadership and management of career education at the three UAS campuses. Responsibilities include program and curriculum development; faculty and staff evaluation; budget development and reporting, monitoring and evaluating curriculum; grant writing, personnel management and program evaluation.

To reinforce this regional cooperation, the two campus directors were recently (May, 2002), reassigned to report directly to the Provost. This new reporting relationship and the regionwide responsibilities of the new deans are further emphasized by the creation of a Provost's Council, which meets monthly throughout the academic year to discuss, plan and coordinate all of the academic matters within the region. A copy of the most recent organizational chart is attached.

The expansion of mid-level academic support through the creation of additional deans addresses several of the suggestions in the body of the evaluation committee's report. The Education Dean heads up the UAS NCATE accreditation effort and, as suggested in the report, is charged with resourcing the extended time and attention occasioned by these professional accreditation requirements. The Career Education Dean provides the additional communication and mentoring among regional career education faculty that the report recommends, as well as assistance with the design, approval and implementation of new curriculum. The additional deans also address the faculty evaluation concern raised in the report, by spreading evaluation responsibilities over several positions, instead of one Dean of Faculty. The additional personnel make more careful evaluation of adjuncts possible.

A final change in academic administration is scheduled to be implemented this fall, when responsibility for all distance education in the region will come under the Provost's office. This reporting change will be supported by additional staff, allowing UAS to respond to several of the suggestions in the evaluation report concerning consistency of distance education policies and procedures, course development, and support for distance faculty and students.

The academic restructure, coupled with the academic support activities described below under Recommendation 3, has, UAS believes, alleviates the concern of the evaluation committee that “the consistency of academic quality may be affected by confusion across campuses as to channels, authority and responsibility in curricular matters.”

Recommendation 3: The evaluation team recommends that UAS address the limited staffing strength in technical support areas such as Computing and Media Services in order to increase instructional support opportunities for both on-campus programs and distance education. The team also encourages expansion of efforts, such as those for faculty mentoring, in order to strengthen pedagogies suited to the various means of course delivery.

Reference to the importance of technology to the achievement of its programmatic goals is found throughout the strategic plan. For example, one of the core values embraced by the campus community is to use “technology effectively in all programs and services.” In its plan, UAS also committed itself to “continue its leadership in technology, with the goal of being in the top ten among its peers as a ‘wired campus’.”

As part of its commitment to distance education—a commitment that increasingly involves more faculty and that blurs the distinction between on-campus and distance classes—UAS in its strategic plan pledges to

- Establish a center for instructional design and delivery for faculty and program development
- Provide opportunities for UAS faculty from all three campuses to explore new technologies

These commitments have resulted in a substantial restructure of technical support areas and a significant increase in staff and other resources.

Strengthening efforts began in Fall, 1999, when new resources were requested in the FY 01 budget process and through the UA President’s Initiative program. Additional funding was secured beginning July, 2000, at which time Computing Services was spun off from Library, Computing and Media Services to form a new Information Technology Services unit, reporting directly to the Provost. In her letter appointing the new Director of IT Services, the Provost states that “UAS is evolving to the stage where having a director for information technology services is necessary. Your responsibilities will be expanded to include coordination of services to the Ketchikan and Sitka campuses.”

Three new academic support positions were added in Fall, 2000. An analyst-programmer position came on board to improve the technical reliability of computer-based instructional systems; a digital media specialist added expertise in this area to faculty; and an additional technical support position increased maintenance of computing labs and classrooms.

Over the past two years, several help-desk positions have also been added, partly through partnerships, with both internal and external users, partly through student technology fees and partly through internal reallocation. A coordinator of help desk functions was secured as part of a larger initiative to improve distance education support.

Through these efforts, computing support staff has doubled since the 1998-99 academic year, from five to the current level of ten full time positions.

In May, 2002, a further step in strengthening technical support for academic programs occurred with the merger of Media Services into the IT unit. The recent merger brings under one roof all of the instructional technology services available to regional faculty, providing increased avenues for training,

mentoring and instructional improvement through effective use of technology, both on campus and in distance programs.

To increase regional coordination, the Director of IT Services has established an infrastructure support committee involving technical staff on all three campuses. The committee meets throughout the year. A recent accomplishment has been the development of a video conferencing capability among the three campuses, which is used extensively for regional meetings of the Chancellor's Cabinet, the Provost's Council and the Faculty Senate.

Additional funding for instructional technical support has been received from both state and federal sources. A successful proposal under the President's initiative process resulted in funds to establish a Center for Instructional Design and Improvement, which is under development. Federal grant funds have increased the video capacity of the media center and are allowing experimentation with video conferencing as a distance-delivery option to rural Alaska.

While UAS will continue to strengthen and develop its technical support areas in line with its strategic goals, it believes that the above actions have adequately addressed the concerns of the evaluation committee in this area.

Summary

The full-scale evaluation committee identified several areas in which UAS could improve—areas that UAS had acknowledged as weaknesses in its self study. Work to address some of these shortcomings had commenced before the evaluation team visit, but the recommendations spurred greater and more coordinated effort. As a result, UAS today has a strategic plan that incorporates programmatic and enrollment goals, and which identifies space and financial resources needed to achieve these goals. It has confronted the problems of a multi-unit system through a substantial reorganization that vests academic authority in the Provost and the regional faculty. A new generation of leadership at the extended campus and decanal level assures that this new structure—and the intent behind it—can take root and flourish unhindered by historical baggage. Finally, the newly enhanced Information Technology Services unit provides both an organizational model and the technical resources to achieve the strong cross-regional coordination and resource sharing that is essential if the vision captured in the strategic plan is to be achieved.

UAS thanks the Commission on Colleges and Universities for the thoughtful and supportive recommendations of the evaluation team and for this opportunity to report on its progress in implementing these recommendations.

Planning Events Timetable

Date	Event
October 12 – 15, 1999	Full Scale Evaluation Committee on-site visit
October, 1999	Enrollment management planning begins with USA Group/Noel Levitz
November 12, 1999	Evaluation Committee report received
December, 1999	Executive Cabinet examines various planning models and processes
December 15, 1999	UAS accreditation affirmed by NASC
February 1, 2000	Executive Cabinet approves a strategic planning process and appoints Dean of Faculty to head up the planning effort; <i>UAS – The Next Decade</i> is chosen as theme
February, 2000	Chancellor Pugh kicks off strategic planning effort with press release to the region and an invitation to participate. <i>UAS – The Next Decade</i> web page established.
March 1, 2000	Chancellor’s Cabinet planning session
April 15, 2000	Regional student focus group meeting
April 18, 2000	Caucus discussion on UAS future is initiated
May 5 and 6, 2000	Strategic planning sessions with all campus constituencies in Sitka and in Ketchikan
May 10, 2000	Faculty mini-convocation for strategic planning
May 23, 2000	Staff planning session
June, 2000	Progress report posted on web site
August 20-21, 2000	Region-wide convocation devoted to planning
October 20, 2000	Caucus discussion on mission initiated
January 9 – 10, 2001	Faculty mini-convocation devoted to institutional and departmental mission statements
January 11, 2001	Draft mission statement e-mailed to regional university community for review and comment
January 25, 2001	Cabinet retreat to review information from planning sessions and to determine final strategic goals
February 2, 2001	Mission statement approved by UAS Faculty Council
February, 2001	Mission statement and core values approved by campus councils
Spring, 2001	UAS commissions The Cunningham Group and The Saratoga Associates to develop a Facilities Master Plan for the Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan campuses, based on the strategic plan
March 7 – 9, 2001	Board of Regents approves UAS revised mission statement
March 19, 2001	Draft strategic plan distributed to Executive Cabinet for review
April 2, 2001	Executive Cabinet approves draft
April, 2001	Draft plan is posted on web site for review and comment by university community
May, 2001	Facilities Master Plan consultants visit all three campuses to conduct interviews and survey existing facilities

June 26 – 29, 2001	Science facilities planning session
August 25, 2001	Draft strategic plan submitted to regional faculty at convocation for review
August, 2001	Draft plan submitted to campus councils
September, 2001	Facilities Master Plan charrette held in Juneau
November 6, 2001	Full-scale presentation of strategic plan with facility and fiscal implications given to UA President Hamilton
November 30, 2001	Final strategic plan complete
February, 2002	Final Facilities Master Plan complete
February, 2002	Strategic plan adopted by campus councils
March 7 – 8, 2002	Strategic and related Facilities Master Plan presented to the Board of Regents