

**UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST
STATEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP**

Chancellor Rick Caulfield

The University of Alaska Southeast is committed to environmental sustainability and stewardship. We believe colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by providing the knowledge and the educated graduates who can address the urgent challenges of climate change. As educators and as community leaders, we also have a responsibility to model environmental sustainability and stewardship both in our curriculum and on our campuses.

We applaud the growing number of countries that have set targets for climate action, consistent with the best available science.¹ In this context, we support development of a climate change agreement in Paris that takes a strong step forward toward a low-carbon, sustainable future. Delaying action on climate change will be costly in economic and human terms. Transition to a low-carbon economy will produce multiple benefits with regard to sustainable and equitable economic growth, public health, resilience to natural disasters, and the health of the global environment. Here in Alaska we know all too well how climate challenges are already impacting our communities, our economy, and our ways of life.²

The foremost mission of the University of Alaska Southeast is student learning, including that focusing on climate change. One of the most important contributions that our university can make is to educate students and our communities about sustainable practices in Alaska and scientific research and policy issues essential to this understanding. Our campuses here in Southeast Alaska are located in the ancestral homeland of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples whose ways of life demonstrate enduring principles of sustainability in a coastal temperate rainforest environment. Our academic degree programs in biology, marine biology, environmental science, environmental studies, geography, and education are well suited to contribute to this educational goal. We are committed to the mission of developing an educated student population and citizenry who understand this history and these issues and, most importantly, are prepared to act.

On our campuses we are taking steps to act on principles of sustainability and of environmental stewardship and equity. In 2014, UAS completed a year-long sustainability audit with the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) program, earning a Bronze rating. Through our Sustainability Committee we are continually exploring how to improve this performance and to incorporate environmentally responsible actions into the life of our university. UAS is fortunate in that it relies almost entirely on renewable electrical energy generated from hydropower. We are designing and building facilities that incorporate energy efficient features in heating and lighting. We are recycling on campus and taking steps to use biodegradable materials in campus services. We teach courses about energy efficient residential design, construction, and renovation, including the use of sustainable building materials. We are committed to expanded use of public transit and energy efficient vehicles on campus—including the recent installation of electric vehicle charging stations.

Long-term sustainability and environmental stewardship are all the more important as the State of Alaska and the university system confront significant economic challenges. With this realization in mind, we pledge to use our talents and available resources to be a leader in teaching about sustainability and in taking action toward a more sustainable future.

¹ IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 151 pp.

² Scientific Panel on Climate Change, City and Borough of Juneau. Climate change: Predicted Impacts on Juneau; Report to Mayor Bruce Botelho and the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly, April 2007.