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Office of the Chancellor

*NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES*

***COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES***

January 11, 2002

Dr. Marshall L. Lind  
Chancellor  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
320 Signers' Hall  
P.O. Box 757580  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-7580

Dear ~~Chancellor~~ <sup>Marshall</sup> Lind:

On behalf of the Commission on Colleges and Universities, I am pleased to report that the accreditation of the University of Alaska Fairbanks has been reaffirmed on the basis of the recent comprehensive self-study and full-scale evaluation. Congratulations on receiving this continued recognition.

The policy of the Commission is not to grant accreditation for a definite number of years. Instead, accreditation must be reaffirmed periodically. Each institution needs to conduct a self-study and be visited by a full evaluation committee at least once every ten years, and during the fifth year, the institution is to submit an interim report and be visited by one or more Commission representatives.

In the case of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the Commission expanded the fall 2001 Evaluation Committee Report to include two additional Concerns and Recommendations:

7. The seventh concern is the inconsistency of required related instruction components of applied certificate and associate degree programs of 30 semester credits or more in length.

UAF has no stated certificate requirements in the catalog for related instruction nor any statement of a standard for the inclusion of related instruction in certificate programs to guide the design of curricula. Consequently, it has not been widely recognized that there is such a requirement. Requirements for related instruction in certificates and the associate of applied science (AAS) degree have been discussed by faculty and administration at the system level but have never been established in system-wide Regents Policy or University regulations. UAF's present requirements for related instruction as stated in the catalog for the AAS were established by the community colleges prior to restructuring. AAS students can avoid either computation or human relations, thus violating related instruction requirements for associate degrees.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the University ensure that all certificate and associate degrees contain recognizable bodies of instruction in program-related areas of communication, computation, and human relations, and that related instruction components be published in the relevant print and electronic catalogs in clear and complete terms (Standard 2.C Undergraduate Program, 2.C.1; Policy 2.1 *General Education/Related Instruction Requirements*).

8. The eighth concern is a lack of comprehensive and consistent assessment of student learning.

All programs reviewed showed some evidence of assessment, and efforts are underway to fully comply with these standards. There is clear understanding of what is necessary and the steps required to be in full compliance with the standard. Currently, assessment is spotty and inconsistent even though there is evidence that assessment has caused changes in the curriculum. As the University expands its certificate and degree programs, there is a concern that assessment of student learning in the various certificate and degree programs across the institution may become uneven.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the University ensure that an assessment of student learning is conducted in all certificate and degree programs offered by the institution, including new program offerings. The assessment model developed for the core curriculum/general education program may serve as a guide for other academic programs (Standard 2.B Educational Program Planning and Assessment, Standard Indicators 2.B.1; 2.B.2; and 2.B.3; Policy 2.2 *Educational Assessment*).

In reaffirming the accreditation of the University, the Commission requested that the University submit a Progress Report in fall 2003 which is to address Recommendations 3, 4, 7, and 8 as expanded in the fall 2001 Evaluation Committee Report. The recommendations as expanded are enclosed for your convenience. We will write in spring 2003 regarding the report.

In the unlikely event the Commission should conclude that an institution is in danger of being unable to fulfill its mission and goals or to continue to meet the eligibility requirements, standards or related policies for accreditation, the Commission reserves the right to request that the institution receive an evaluation committee for a special review.

The Commission concurs with the Evaluation Committee in commending the University of Alaska Fairbanks for its diligent and consistent efforts to reduce its backlog of deferred maintenance and to renovate and modernize its academic facilities. The Commission commends the University for its progress in using assessment of courses in the baccalaureate core to improve teaching and learning. The Commission finds laudable the University's use of joint faculty appointments, the numerous examples of interdisciplinary teaching and research, and the sharing of equipment, laboratories, and facilities. The University clearly benefits from its extensive planning process and the implementation of specific accountability measures which provide information for informed decision making about University financial allocations, space planning and other activities. Lastly, the Commission is pleased to find that UAF has developed synergistic relationships between its successful research institutes and their associated academic programs. The faculty's commitment to enhancing *both* research productivity and ensuring the quality of undergraduate and graduate education is indeed commendable.

Dr. Marshall L. Lind  
January 11, 2002  
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Best wishes for a rewarding New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra E. Elman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Sandra E. Elman  
Executive Director

SE:ar

cc: Dr. Paul Reichardt, Provost  
Mr. Mark R. Hamilton, President, University of Alaska System

Evaluation Committee Report  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
October 2001  
*Concerns and Recommendations*

1. The first concern is that UAF has insufficient laboratory and office space to support its expanding research and graduate education base. The UA president and UAF chancellor's initiatives, supported by the governor, and funded by the legislature, provided new faculty in many of the science and engineering fields. Moreover, federal support for many of these programs led to an extraordinary increase in research activity and the potential for a significant expansion of graduate students in these programs; however, the university faces a serious space limitation problem. It does not have the laboratory space or research equipment to continue the expansion of its research or probably even maintain the current pace. Thus, it is vital that the state provide increased support for laboratory expansion. Without that support, the state's recent investment in the new academic and R & D initiatives will not reach its full potential and thus the outcomes desired for Alaskan economic development. For example, without the support for UAF's proposed new fisheries facilities, the state's investment in this outstanding program could be stifled. Further, expansion of research facilities and the provision of state-of-the-art equipment on the Fairbanks campus will be necessary to support the continued research expansion of UAF's institutes and colleges.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the University of Alaska Fairbanks seek funding and undertake such steps as are necessary to ensure the construction of additional instructional, office, and research facilities and acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment at the Fairbanks campus and at the College of Rural Alaska campuses, and at specialized research locations. (Standards 8.A - Instructional and Support Facilities, 8.A.1, 8.A.2, 8.A.3; 8.B - Equipment and Materials, 8.B.1; 8.C - Physical Resources Planning, 8.C.1, 8.C.2)

2. A second concern facing UAF is the growing problem of salary compression and in some cases inversion. UAF salaries are significantly below market levels in many disciplines. This has affected the ability to hire and retain qualified faculty, and has threatened the quality of some academic programs. Where market-based salaries for new hires have been possible, they have created problems of salary scale compression and inversion, whereby faculty who served UAF for many years are compensated less than those recently hired. This has led to retention problems among senior faculty who are critical to UAF's mission of building global distinction in its research and teaching.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that UAF immediately address faculty compensation issues to bring salaries to levels adequate to attract and retain an excellent faculty. (Standard 4.A - Faculty Selection, Evaluation, Roles, Welfare, and Development; 4.A.4)

3. A third concern is the absence of faculty and staff handbooks. The integrity and equity of the faculty evaluative processes are crucial to the institution's ability to fulfill its mission. From the Senate Blue Book and the Provost's website, it is not clear that the University's evaluation plans include administrative access to all primary data (e.g., copies of publications, student and peer evaluations of teaching) for any review other than tenure review. Nor is it clear that multiple indices are used in the evaluation of teaching. Because there is no single faculty handbook where all the policies and procedures are spelled out, and because bargaining agreements, university, college, and peer unit relevant policies and procedures all apply, consistent understanding, interpretation and application of policy is difficult. Similar confusion exists regarding staff hiring, classification, and evaluation.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the UAF develop faculty and staff handbooks that collect the policies and procedures governing appointment, evaluation, scholarship, research and artistic creation, for all faculty and staff, full or part-time, on all campuses of UAF, and that evaluative provisions conform to the policy on faculty evaluation. We recommend UAF provide a report to the Commission in two years. (Standard 4.A - Faculty Selection, Evaluation, Roles, Welfare, and Development, 4.A.5, 4.A.6, Policy 4.1 *Faculty Evaluation*; 6.C - Leadership and Management, 6.C.8)

4. A fourth concern is that of student records. Student records, including transcripts, may be accurate and comprehensive, but they are not entirely secure on the Fairbanks campus or the College of Rural Alaska campuses. Storage of student records including transcripts must be secure and fireproof.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that necessary steps be taken promptly to provide secure and fireproof storage of all student records. If records need to be converted from hard copy to another format for storage, that conversion should be accomplished quickly. We recommend UAF provide a report to the Commission in two years. (Standard 3.C - Academic Credit and Records, 3.C.5)

5. A fifth concern is associated with the future direction of UAF as it relates to its diverse role of serving as a world leader in Arctic research and other research areas as well as being an effective education provider for rural Alaska. Integrating the College of Rural Alaska into the dynamic undergraduate and graduate research developments at UAF is crucial for the future of the institution and its role in rural economic development. With the growth in state support for higher education, it is important for UAF to carefully plan for these joint activities and effectively integrate them.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that UAF systematically plan for the integration of its activities, including teaching, research and public service consistent with its graduate, research and undergraduate programs with the role of the College of Rural Alaska in rural Alaskan development. (Standard 1.A - Mission and Goals)

6. The sixth concern is that of direct appointments of leadership (Standard 6.A.3).

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the University of Alaska Board of Regents and the UAF campus review governance provisions for consideration of faculty, student and staff views and judgments in those matters in which these constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest such as the appointment of senior officials (Standard 6.A.3).

7. The seventh concern is the inconsistency of required related instruction components of applied certificate and associate degree programs of 30 semester credits or more in length.

UAF has no stated certificate requirements in the catalogue for related instruction nor any statement of a standard for the inclusion of related instruction in certificate programs to guide the design of curricula. Consequently, it has not been widely recognized that there is such a requirement. Requirements for related instruction in certificates and the associate of applied science (AAS) degree have been discussed by faculty and administration at the system level but have never been established in system-wide Regents Policy or University regulations. UAF's present requirements for related instruction as stated in the catalog for the AAS were established by the community colleges prior to restructuring. AAS students can avoid either computation or human relations, thus violating related instruction requirements for associate degrees.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee recommends that the University ensure that all certificate and associate degrees contain recognizable bodies of instruction in program-related areas of communication, computation, and human relations, and that related instruction components be published in the relevant print and electronic catalogues in clear and complete terms (Standard 2.C Undergraduate Program; 2.C.1; Policy 2.1 *General Education/Related Instruction Requirements*).

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