

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

A Comprehensive Peer Evaluation Report

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

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*A confidential report of findings prepared for the
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*

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Evaluators

Dr. Joseph J. Fedock, *Chair*

Senior Vice Provost
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana

Dr. Jane C. Sherman

Vice Provost for Academic Policy and
Evaluation
Washington State University
Olympia, Washington

Dr. Perry J. Brown

Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs
The University of Montana
Missoula, Montana

Mr. Russell Goodrich

Associate Vice Chancellor, Division of
Professional and Technical Education
Utah State University
Price, Utah

Ms. Anneliese A. Ripley

Dean, School of Outreach and Research
The University of Montana – Western
Dillon, Montana

Dr. F. Ann Millner

President
Weber State University
Ogden, Utah

Ms. Kay Christensen

Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs
Idaho State University
Pocatello, Idaho

Ms. Bonnie J. Allen

Dean of Libraries
The University of Montana
Missoula, Montana

Ms. Laura E. Hubbard

Associate Vice President for Budget and Finance
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

Dr. Sandra E. Elman, *Liaison*

President
Northwest Commission on Colleges and
Universities
Redmond, Washington

Introduction

The University of Alaska Fairbanks has evolved significantly as an institution of higher education since its establishment as the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines in 1917. The UAF of today is Alaska's primary research institution within the statewide University of Alaska System, and serves as a Land Grant, Sea Grant and Space Grant university. It is one of the three major academic administrative units in the statewide university system.

A key attribute of UAF is that it serves as both a research university and a community college system. Its academic offerings range from certificates and associate degrees to doctoral-level programs, and it demonstrates a special commitment to serving Alaska's Native people and rural communities over a vast geographic region. Given its location and mission, UAF has placed an emphasis in its research and creative activities that focus on issues relevant to the circumpolar North.

Since the last full-scale evaluation of University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2001, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has considered a number of programmatic changes and the 2006 regular interim report submitted by UAF. Those change items have all been approved by the Commission and reaffirmation of regional accreditation was granted on the basis of the 2006 report. In recent years, the university has focused its efforts on the transition to the new NWCCU standards in preparation for this present full-scale evaluation, without having the benefit of engaging in prior steps in the new seven year cycle of accreditation review.

An additional factor that has substantially affected the University of Alaska Fairbanks in recent years has been the leadership changes at both the campus and system level. The Chancellor of UAF was appointed to his position on a permanent basis in 2009, and the President of the University of Alaska System has been in place since 2010. Other campus leadership positions have also been in transition in recent times.

Assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report & support materials

The self-evaluation process at the University of Alaska Fairbanks appears to have been well-organized, very participatory, and managed with a significant degree of care and oversight. Key administrative, faculty, and staff personnel were actively engaged throughout the self-evaluation process. It appears that the process incorporated substantial input from rural campus participants. Specifically, the identification and refinement of institutional core themes seems to be the result of broad-based constituent input and dialogue.

The content of the self-evaluation report is informative, well-written and portrays the university in a candid and open fashion. In general, the individual chapters appropriately address the elements of the accreditation standards. However, given that UAF has only recently identified its core themes, and developed stated objectives and indicators for those core themes, there are some inconsistencies in the report related to the assessment and improvement standards associated with core theme planning.

The report provides adequate institutional context related to mission, core themes and expectations and it also provides a well-articulated overview of mission fulfillment, adaptation and sustainability. Despite these positive characteristics, it was somewhat more difficult to discern the rationale for some of the core theme objectives and indicators, as well as the intended relationships between some of the core themes.

The self-evaluation report content was verified by several methods, including interviews with key administrators and a wide range of faculty, staff and students. Discussions were also held with several members of the University of Alaska Board of Regents regarding report content and other issues. The President of the University of Alaska System also provided his assessment of the report. Institutional and state websites were examined, as well as exhibit documentation.

Eligibility Requirements

At the beginning of each chapter of the self-evaluation report, there is appropriate text that relates to particular eligibility requirements associated with that chapter. Consequently, the document as a whole, and as verified through on-site discussions, appears to demonstrate that the University of Alaska Fairbanks meets all of the provisions of the Commission's Eligibility Requirements for Accredited Higher Education Institutions.

Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Mission

The current mission statement for the University of Alaska Fairbanks was adopted by the UA Board of Regents in 2006. That statement is guided by, and is consistent with, the University of Alaska mission statement which was established in 2000. A distinctive element of UAF's mission is the explicit acknowledgment of UAF as "America's arctic university". Hence, its educational, research and outreach programs place emphasis upon serving Alaska and the circumpolar North. This mission appears to be well understood by all of the institution's major constituencies and it provides a strong foundation for strategic planning and management activities.

Core Themes

The five core themes chosen for the University of Alaska Fairbanks, i.e., *Educate, Discover, Prepare, Connect, and Engage*, appear to manifest the essential elements of UAF's mission and collectively they encompass its mission. As a Land Grant university, UAF incorporates the historic roles of such universities within its core themes. The research-intensive mission of UAF and the institution's commitment to serving the diverse peoples of the region appear to be appropriately represented through the identification and articulation of the core themes and the accompanying objectives.

UAF has established objectives for each core theme that, in general, are meaningful and verifiable indicators of achievement in assessing overall mission fulfillment. However, there appears to be significant variability in the perception of some UAF constituencies as to the relationship of some core themes to mission fulfillment, and uncertainties regarding appropriate indicators to help measure that mission fulfillment. In particular, it appears that there is not yet broad-based consensus on identifying the best indicators for assessing some core themes, including the *Connect* and *Engage* core themes, nor a strategy yet developed to assess mission fulfillment in a more holistic fashion. It is anticipated that the core theme indicators will be revised over time, and that objectives will be re-visited in order to help ensure better alignment with mission fulfillment.

Resources and Capacity

Governance

The system of governance at the University of Alaska Fairbanks is established in the Alaska State Constitution. Members of the statewide Board of Regents are appointed by the governor and they have the fundamental authority and responsibility for oversight of the three constituent universities of the UA System – UAF, University of Alaska Anchorage, and University of Alaska Southeast. The system is headed by the UA President who manages the overall operation of the university, and who is authorized to appoint the chief executive (Chancellor) of each of the three universities. The Board effectively exercises its legal authority and is stable and well-suited to lead the university. The responsibilities and relationships among and between the Board, the President, and the Chancellor are well-defined and well-understood by all university constituencies.

The board has a well-established organizational structure and operating procedures. Evaluation of the Chancellor and the President occur on a regular basis, and the Board members appear to be committed to acting as a collective rather than on an individual basis.

Institutional leadership is appropriately organized to support fulfillment of UAF's mission and goals. A significant issue with respect to leadership and management has been the turnover in senior leadership positions in recent years. However, it appears that leadership stability is developing and that central administration is functioning well.

Institutional governance is a consultative process that significantly engages faculty, staff and students in university-level decision making. UAF makes a special effort to include the rural campuses in appropriate governance and administration issues, usually via distance technologies. Broadly representative committees are effective mechanisms in providing review and advice at the institutional level.

Human Resources

Over the past two years there has been a concerted effort to address concerns in the human resources area, which included failure by some supervisors to regularly evaluate their staff and the inability by Human Resources to track evaluations in a way that would allow staff to identify when evaluations were missing. Many of the corrective actions that have been taken and the initiatives that were developed are still being implemented, with some progress reported. The completion of staff evaluations is being tracked more effectively with the objective that all staff will be evaluated on a regular basis.

More professional development opportunities are being provided for both staff and faculty. A supervisor training program has been implemented that is mandatory for employees who are hired or promoted into supervisory positions. Staff are now given the opportunity to work with their supervisors and develop career development plans that will enable them to pursue advancement. Succession planning has also been implemented to help ensure effective coverage of workload in

the units. Processes are being reviewed to improve and streamline them and to adopt a more customer service-centered approach. Surveys are administered annually to assess employee and constituent satisfaction, and results are used to further improve services and enhance processes.

Education Resources

UAF offers over 200 degrees and certificates that range from a variety of occupational endorsements and certificates through doctoral programs. The programs offered are highly diversified based on the student populations served in each region and clearly reflect local needs and cultures. UAF is committed to delivering programs in areas that are often devoid of roads, internet access, and other relevant infrastructure. UAF is complimented, in general, and remote campus personnel and directors specifically, for the deep and comprehensive commitment shown in identifying and meeting local educational needs.

Outcomes were noted for all programs as part of a comprehensive program and assessment review cycle that was completed for all programs in 2010. The results of assessment efforts, however, were not always used for program improvement. Clear evidence of program modifications were noted in several programs, but the implementation was not consistent across program areas and disciplines.

Appropriate faculty involvement and administrative oversight mechanisms were evident in program development and assessment. Although additional efforts to refine outcome measures appear to be needed, the university has used an inclusive process to identify measures to reflect successful program outcomes. For example, although UAF is an open admission institution at the certificate and associate degree levels, selected programs have identified and communicated standards that must be met to ensure student success, with an increasing amount of communication occurring at the high school level through Tech Prep programs.

Oversight by the faculty, academic and campus leadership, as well as system leadership and the Board of Regents, has kept the content, rigor, and designators of certificates and degrees discrete and appropriate by level. Even though it is an open-admission institution, UAF has recently become more careful to admit students to programs based on documented evidence of adequate preparation. For example, a student with a low GPA or low or outdated ACT score can now be admitted to the College of Rural and Community Development as a certificate or associates degree student, or to UAF as a pre-baccalaureate student until developmental or preparatory work is successfully completed. Students admitted to the engineering programs, for example, must be ready for calculus as freshmen. Although the consensus UAF viewpoint appears to be that more progress is needed, a more systematic application of admission-to-program standards seems to have led to a recent improvement in retention and graduation rates.

UAF identifies and publishes expected degree program outcomes, although that information is difficult to locate on the university's website. It does not uniformly appear in the catalog. Expected student learning outcomes by program are most consistently available in the Program Review Reports, where they are the basis for assessment of learning, but these are not publicly available due to FERPA concerns, as well as the fact that the three-level review process is not yet complete. Similarly, expected student learning outcomes for specific courses are most readily available in the assessment reports for the Core Curriculum, but not in resources that students are likely to consult.

The faculty is clearly in control of the course, curriculum, and degree development and approval process, and their standards for degree level and award of credit and degrees are traditional in design and articulated in policy.

Faculty appear to be committed to establishing learning outcomes that remain consistent for a course or program across all locations and all delivery modalities. Some faculty members teaching to or on rural campuses are energized by the creativity required to make content relevant and engaging for diverse students while meeting the standard learning outcomes of the course. Admission and graduation requirements for all levels are identified in the catalog and on websites.

The Faculty Senate leadership and committee chairs show a refreshing diversity of age, gender, ethnicity, and academic discipline. Evidence suggests that the faculty has the ultimate control in matters of curriculum, and that the administration recognizes and respects their role and, in fact, demands that they step up and deal with areas within their purview. For example, the Faculty Senate members are pleased with their role in helping to shape the core themes. It was important to them that the *Discover* theme address all areas of faculty creativity rather than having separate themes for science-based (funded) and other creative endeavors. They were confident that metrics could be found to match the unified concept.

A 15-member committee of faculty members from all colleges and schools was the first level of review in the recent, universal Program Review process. The group made recommendations on all programs at all levels in an iterative process with each department. Outcome assessment was the one non-negotiable element of all reviews. Programs had to have at least two measures, and at least one had to be a direct measure. Final recommendations were forwarded to the university administration for further review. A significant amount of time from very dedicated faculty went into this process, and an equal amount of learning resulted. It remains to be seen if that learning can be utilized in the future toward increasing the consistency and sophistication of the assessment/improvement process.

UAF recognizes that the degree to which its library and information resources are integrated into the teaching and learning process is considerable, but not consistent across programs. The Librarians have materials and modules available and are frequently invited into classrooms to provide instruction in this area. Librarians are assigned by discipline, and collaborate with faculty in their areas.

Credit for prior experiential learning is specifically designed to meet the NWCCU standard, although individuals acknowledged that previous experience at institutions in other regions sometimes leads to surprise at the limitations on such credit in this region. Institutional policies are clear and portfolios are the generally accepted means of documenting prior learning. Faculty and departments are given the option to participate in awarding credit for prior experiential learning or not. For example, the School of Management does not accept or award any credit for prior experiential learning.

Transfer credit is evaluated in the Admissions Office based on Faculty Senate approved policies. The core curriculum is readily transferable among Alaska universities, and accepted intact from most community colleges in the northwest. In course-by-course transfer, UAF has developed a framework of equivalencies based on disciplinary consistency rather than specific courses (e.g.,

any multi-area history course is accepted in lieu of Modern World History).

The General Education (Core) component of the curriculum is well-established, but is currently under review. As an example of Faculty Senate control of and attention to the Core, the review is driven by faculty distress with current Core outcomes as they manifest in upper division courses where too many students cannot write competently or cannot pass basic science courses due to inadequate math preparation. A related issue is that a number of programs do not have entry requirements, though all have graduation requirements. For example, a forestry or biology major may be unable to pass a required chemistry course, even as a senior.

After lengthy debate, the Faculty Senate has arrived at a set of guidelines for a new Core. The deans have contributed to this effort by not focusing solely on the financial incentives associated with teaching Core courses. The courses currently included in the Core Curriculum have identified and assessable learning outcomes. Some areas of the Core Curriculum also have stated their learning outcomes in relation to the intended outcomes of the overall Core Curriculum. The Core, as a program, along with the courses it encompasses, is assessed by the Faculty Senate Core Review committee. Outcomes for applied degrees consistently used industry-based standards, where appropriate (e.g., ASE and NATEF standards for automotive programs). Reviews from programmatic evaluation standards also indicated UAF programs are meeting appropriate industry standards.

Applied degrees were also found to include appropriate related instruction in communication, computation, and human relations. Appropriate deans, vice chancellors, or directors oversaw the selection of appropriate faculty.

Graduate education at UAF is administered through the Graduate School. A dean who reports to the provost is responsible for graduate education on campus. Graduate education is consistent with the university's mission as a research institution, and UAF is the sole doctoral degree granting university in the state. Graduate education directly aligns with the UAF mission to advance and disseminate knowledge through teaching and research and to promote academic excellence, student success, and lifelong learning. It also provides opportunities for graduates to extend their knowledge and skill development and to prepare for highly complex and technical, and thus high value, occupations. Additionally, it is closely related to the research and creative scholarship activities of the university as graduate students are a significant component of the research workforce and are, by the nature of their academic programs, engaged in creative activities involving publication, performance, and exhibition.

At UAF graduate students reside in many different academic situations. For example, some are resident in institutes independent of schools and colleges; others are in integrated units where institutes are within the schools and colleges; and others have no relationships with institutes but reside solely within their school or college. Given that faculty members have similar residential arrangements, coordination of graduate education is complex and possibly inequitable in student access to faculty mentoring and financial assistance.

A related faculty issue potentially affecting graduate education is the divide between institute faculty members and school and college faculty members. With not all institute faculty members having an academic department home, opportunities for these faculty to participate in educational activities is lessened. In addition, because some school and college faculty members do not have

regular contact with research faculty members in the institutes, they have a lesser opportunity to learn the leading-edge ideas and knowledge being generated in the highly successful research institutes and to participate in some research activities. It appears that this situation does cause some tension between faculty members with varying research affiliations, and that it may have a negative impact on the university. Further identification and discussion of these issues might lead to creative resolution of these issues where all parties benefit.

A review of the policies of the Graduate School suggests that the policies and procedures for graduate education, including admission and retention policies, awarding of graduate credit, and evaluation of performance all are within the standards for accreditation. The mechanics of graduate education appear to be well addressed. The faculties leading the programs have the requisite credentials and skills, and the facilities, especially science and engineering facilities, are generally modern and up to date.

Some of the graduate programs have small enrollments and have graduated very few students. Increasing the number of graduate students commensurate with the level of research expenditures would increase the annual average enrollment and graduation numbers, but there likely would remain several marginally productive programs given that the research opportunities and funding are skewed toward specific programs.

Overall it appears that graduate education is an important part of the mission fulfillment for UAF, but that concerted attention to its enhancement is necessary to allow the university to meet its potential and more fully fulfill its mission.

Community and program advisory groups are used across many program areas to guide UAF planning. Several examples of short-term and degree programs were reviewed that were developed as a direct result of advisory group input. This effort is a clear implementation of the *Prepare* and *Engage* core themes. This effort was widespread and evident in all locations where UAF offers educational and research services.

A consistent approval and review procedure was found for proposed programs. The university appears to follow practices consistent with internal policies as well as Regental and UA system requirements. While minor differences were found within organizational units, faculty and appropriate review committees consistently reviewed new course and program proposals. Record-keeping information for non-credit courses has been lacking in the past and courses were not entered consistently in the Banner enterprise system. As a result, the numbers for non-credit and continuing education efforts have been under-reported. Efforts have now been put in place to require data entry in Banner for these courses. The initial result was to under-report non-credit courses shown on state reports, but the numbers now reported are likely more accurate than past reporting efforts.

Student Support Resources

Support for students, as demonstrated through efficient, dedicated, and helpful service, is evident in many units of the institution including the Division of Student Services, the Academic Advising Center, and the College of Rural and Community Development (CRCD), through its Rural Student Services Advising Center. Staff and faculty engage in a broad spectrum of activities that help

students enter the institution, persist, and succeed in attaining their educational goals in an environment that is generally safe and secure. All available evidence, including self-evaluation materials and campus-based interviews, suggest that UAF is meeting the applicable standards associated with student support resources.

Initial services to students, including recruitment, pre-admission counseling, admissions, registration, financial aid, transcript evaluation, and credit transfer, are provided by the Office of Admissions and Registrar and the Office of Financial Aid in an able and competent manner. There is a focused recruitment strategy that aligns with the institution's mission statement and articulation of core themes. A decrease in time required to process applications has been occurring recently.

A system of academic advising distributes responsibility among staff and faculty. Staff advise for general studies and undeclared majors, and faculty assume the principal advising role once students have declared a major. The Academic Advising Center offers regular training opportunities for staff and faculty and provides comprehensive, high quality resources to supplement these workshops, including an undergraduate academic advising manual. The institution has recently adopted *Degree Works* software that enables more immediate, effective advising on curricular and graduation requirements. This has renewed interest in, and provided incentive for, faculty to participate in training. It appears that program advising is uneven in quality and effectiveness. The availability of a convenient, user-friendly tool may help remedy this issue.

Staff and faculty who work on the rural campuses, as part of the CRCDD, are committed to serving students and providing place-based access to education. Through the CRCDD, students benefit from a broad spectrum of services (recruitment, admission, and advising) and significant strides in outreach appear to have been made. For example, support for key student manager positions was shifted from grant funding to state appropriated fund. This evidences commitment to continued access for rural Alaska Native population. Advisors spend substantial time audio-conferencing with students in outlying communities, advising them, and occasionally travelling to the villages. These staff often have extensive service areas. For example, one rural campus advisor is responsible for serving 60 communities in her service area.

The Academic Advising Center staff appears to provide quality services for students. Advisors were deemed to be excellent, supportive, and accessible. An example of an innovative program administered through the center, which has proved to be a successful retention initiative, is the supplemental instruction program. Under this program, students in courses with historically low pass rates are given the opportunity to receive extra instruction from a peer student who has successfully completed the course.

Evidence indicates that UAF provides varied and extensive co-curricular and support activities and services, and that students are appreciative of the positive, supportive attitude of staff and pleased with their experience at the institution.

Library and Information Resources

The Elmer E Rasmuson and BioSciences Library are the two primary libraries supporting the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Apart from the Rasmuson library is the Geophysical Institute

Library which is a special purpose library with separate governance, budget and policy. The Rasmuson and the Geophysical Library each have new leadership within the past year.

The library contribution to mission fulfillment and to each of the core themes is reflected in collections and services to the students, faculty and community. Unit level short range plans include multiple projects to move collections increasingly to the web through purchase and digitization in support of the core themes of *Educate, Discover and Engage*. Long range plans are designed to support *Educate, Connect, Discover and Engage* with additional projects directed at the conversion to digital collections and the systematic assessment of the information literacy course that is part of the core curriculum. The *Prepare* core theme does not have a specific activity from the library identified in the unit plan, but the library does have partnerships with Fairbanks K-12 and statewide initiatives that could contribute to this theme as well. The campus wide indicators for each core theme are not yet tightly aligned with the library strategies.

The mission of the university is strongly reflected in the library services and collection through the emphasis on Alaska, the circumpolar North and the diverse cultures of its peoples. The library is aesthetically enhanced through its art work of Alaskan artists and native artworks. The research and learning mission of the university is supported by the collections, most specifically its extensive special collections and archives of Alaska political and natural history and most specifically in its Alaska and Polar Region (APR) collections. The importance of the Alaska and Polar Region collection is recognized and has attracted grants to support processing of the collections and outreach activities. The growth and maintenance of the APR collection is further supported by a significant proportion of the materials budget.

The APR collection is diverse in format and broad in its scope. The collection includes the papers of Senator Ted Stevens, film, manuscript, photographic and oral collections of the history, language and peoples of Alaska. The library has invested considerable space and personnel to the APR collection and extended the use of the collection with the development of the Alaska and Polar Periodical Index.

The library is financially challenged to maintain currency, breadth and depth in all of its collecting areas and to make these collections available. The library materials budget has not increased to cover increases in cost due to inflation and the technology associated with the creation and delivery of digitized materials. As the result of the lack of inflationary increases, the library is faced with collection reductions. A concern is the financial sustainability of the collections and services to support not only the key circumpolar collections but also the technology, professional expertise and materials for the collection as a whole.

The use of assessment data to guide decision making is a “work in progress.” Collection development services routinely looks at usage data to guide acquisitions and to manage the collection. Comparative data of peer institution collections is gathered and analyzed to improve the research capacity of the library for its users. The library has conducted two user surveys to gather user satisfaction data and comments regarding user needs. There are plans to administer a national standardized test in the next two years that will provide greater comparative data. These surveys have provided the data that led to the addition of a coffee service in the library, redesign of the web site and specific collection actions. Data that are routinely collected across library operations are

reportedly collected but the use of such data to guide library services and operations is not documented.

The library instruction program includes LS101, a library research class that is a required course in the university core curriculum and LS100 offered through the College of Rural and Community Development. The learning outcomes are documented with testing at the start and completion of the class but without any longitudinal analysis. The unit long term plan includes a revision of the course with greater input from faculty on the preparation of students. The library has librarians assigned to each discipline who provide on-demand instruction to support specific class research projects. The reference desk also aids users in the use of the library and in locating information. Additional support to users is provided using technology for chat services to access librarians and a new program to tour the library using cell phone audio programs. The library also uses flat screen technology to announce news and events in the library.

The level of evaluation of the adequacy, utilization, security and quality of the Rasmuson library and collections is varied. The development of an assessment program is a priority shared by the library faculty and the new dean. The library study space in Rasmuson and BioScience has been identified as inadequate in the university master plan. Collection analysis is systematic and ongoing. New program proposals require library consultation and evaluation for sufficiency of materials to support the program. Authentication is required for remote access to electronic materials. Security of personal information in the library's systems is currently being analyzed to remove personal identification such as social security numbers.

The Rasmuson library is a partner in several statewide and local library agreements that advances the mission of the university through outreach to provide Alaskans access to information via electronic means. Locally, Rasmuson cooperates with the Fairbanks public library and school district in allowing access to collections and assistance in research. Statewide cooperative agreements include two services, SLED, the Statewide Library Electronic Doorway and the Alaska Digital Pipeline, that provide the electronic databases and reference materials to Alaskans. The utilization of these services is documented by noting the number of times patrons log-on to the system and by noting their use of individual materials. A qualitative evaluation of the services is limited to regular committee and board discussions.

One concern is the lack of a regular and systematic assessment program of the library services, collections, and its partnerships.

Financial Resources

Financial planning and management at UAF occur within the larger context of its role as part of the University of Alaska (UA) System. At a governance level, the UA Board of Regents establishes a policy framework for all System institutions, approves operating and capital budgets, approves issuance of debt, and monitors performance. At an operational level, financial management functions are shared between UA and UAF staff. System staff have direct oversight for all UA institutions in cash management and investments, financial statement preparation and external audit, debt management, financial information systems, internal audit, and some advancement operations. UAF staff assume the direct functional oversight for the campus complementary processes and for the remainder of university financial management functions.

The UA System establishes statewide priorities focused on areas of importance to the state, and these priorities primarily inform the process for requesting and allocating additional state funding for new or existing programs. There exists a collaborative process between the three UA institutions and the system president to set these priorities. Statewide priorities are currently viewed by UAF as being consistent with, and not in competition with, the university's core themes - though the two are not explicitly tied together. The UA System also distributes state appropriations between the three UA institutions. A recent development that potentially affects the manner in which the university allocates funds to its core themes (or alternatively introduces more complex cost accounting relationships between programmatic areas) is the introduction of seven separate appropriations to the UA system, and two separate appropriations to UAF, effectively earmarking funds for certain programs. There exists some concern about how this change will impact campus operations.

To date, the university's operating budget processes have been largely incremental in nature, with the exception of the Performance-Based Budget process used to reallocate a small pool of funds (\$1.8 million in FY11) to high priority areas. Requests for funds are initiated by unit leadership and reviewed by the Planning and Budget Committee, a representative body of faculty, staff, and executive leadership which makes recommendations to the Chancellor. The current guiding documents for this review are the Strategic Plan 2010 and Vision 2017. Evidence suggests that recent institutional budgeting efforts and culture are less siloed and more coordinated than was the case in previous years. Given its place in the evolutionary cycle of its core theme development, however, the university has not yet fully intentionally incorporated its themes into this budgeting process.

Several converging factors point to issues regarding allocation and reallocation of resources in order to help ensure a sustainable future for the UAF mission. UAF has benefitted from a strong level of state support (between 41-45% of its operating budget over the past five years). However, the legislature has been signaling that it wishes to reduce its level of support to the universities, and recent appropriation increases have not kept pace with costs. There exists a mixed viewpoint about the level of risk posed to state support, but there is a consensus in the value of diversifying funding sources proactively.

The university's other primary operating budget revenue stream is federal sources, which are also currently at some risk given the national economic situation. The university has begun measures to pursue alternative funding sources and/or implement efficiencies. Some of these strategies, such as fundraising, will take some time to come to fruition and realize a return on investment. Others, such as cost saving measures and public/private partnerships, can have more immediate impact. The university has undertaken prudent efforts in the past two years to address unit operating deficits and to increase its overall financial flexibility. These are all positive steps that demonstrate the university's commitment to its future financial health and sustainability. However, while the available evidence indicates that the changing funding picture could have impacts on programs, it is not clear how the university plans to formally consider these impacts through its budget processes and in light of its core themes.

The university has a very young advancement function, which is still in its formative stages. The university's fundraising priorities are consistent with the university's core themes and its statewide priorities, and there is an intentional effort to be strategic about donor requests. The advancement

operation sees itself as an integral part of the *Connect* and *Engage* themes. Gift funds are deposited with and managed by the UA Foundation, a separate 501(c)(3) corporation which benefits the entire UA System. This sets up a unique relationship with a single foundation serving the interests of three institutions but one that is reflective of the emerging nature of UAF fundraising activities and likely makes sense currently in light of economies of scale. As the advancement function grows in size, scale, and complexity, UAF indicates it intends to monitor this relationship in light of changing needs.

Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Similar to many universities, UAF is facing an aging facilities stock and a growing backlog of deferred maintenance. The Board of Regents has designated "Deferred Maintenance and Renewal and Repurposing" as its number one capital priority, and in FY12 UAF received \$22 million in state funding for deferred maintenance projects and authority to bond for an additional \$33 million. It appears that the most significant immediate facilities challenge for the university is its aging power plant. The university is currently seeking funding from the state for this project.

The university has completed and/or is updating master plans for the Fairbanks campus (updated 2010) and all of its rural sites. These planning efforts were undertaken prior to UAF's development of its core themes, and therefore at this stage are not specifically tied to those themes. The stated vision for the 2010 campus master plan is "to create a campus environment that supports the institutional mission of UAF." The efforts of UAF to conduct comprehensive planning studies exploring potential issues across the span of its mission elements speaks positively to this commitment.

The university has also placed increased emphasis on safety awareness and training, which is delivered in person and through an e-learning portal to facilitate flexibility and outreach to rural sites. UAF has also recently mandated safety training for all employees but is still in the early stages of implementing this policy. Currently, the university does not have an enterprise reporting system to track these training experiences.

Training for faculty in the use of technology appears to be a challenging issue at UAF. Some pockets of excellence were noted in the School of Education and Center for Distance Education, where dedicated staff operate in a distributed environment. Previously, training in administrative information systems was the only centralized training, and central IT has expanded in recent years by 2 FTE to meet university demand, particularly in the academic area. However, this upgraded staffing level does not appear to be able to keep up with demand for services.

The Faculty and Student Technology Committee (FAST) is the governance group tasked with developing a strategic IT plan, and it makes its recommendations to the Chancellor. The university recently invested \$1 million in smart boards for classrooms based on FAST recommendations, but as yet does not have a formal replacement plan for academic or other technologies. The UA System has retained a consultant to make recommendations related to academic IT needs, and that report is expected in Spring 2012. Hence, at this time these issues are not yet integrated with UAF's core themes in support of its mission.

Planning and Implementation

Institutional Planning

Planning processes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks appear to have improved over time, and long-range planning is evolving into a systematic, integrated process that is becoming part of the institutional culture. Those university processes are well-defined and include participation by all appropriate constituencies. At the university level, planning activities adequately guide decisions on resource allocations and assessment of institutional capacity.

Comprehensive planning activities have been influenced, in part, by the timing of this present full-scale evaluation on behalf of NWCCU, as well as by the leadership changes that have occurred at the system and campus levels. The UA Strategic Plan 2009 was developed in 2003 and provides long-range goals for the system. The system level strategic plan is scheduled to be revised soon, under the leadership of the new UA President.

At the system level, there appears to be a greater emphasis being placed on collaboration between the three universities to help achieve statewide goals. The system focus seems to be shifting more to “outputs” (such as numbers of graduates) as opposed to “inputs” in terms of planning activities. All three universities enjoy a broad base of statewide support, and the fundamental mission elements of each university appear to be stable. However, given the growth of UA Anchorage within the state’s population center, it is likely that issues will emerge that will substantively impact the present operation of UAF, especially in a constrained resource environment.

The UAF Strategic Plan 2010 was approved by the Regents in 2006 and has served the institution well in providing strategic pathways and accompanying goals that have guided the university’s development in recent years. That plan was initially scheduled to be revised in the present timeframe, but because of the timing of this full-scale NWCCU evaluation, UAF strategic planning will commence later this academic year and will incorporate feedback from this accreditation review process.

Another key planning document that has been developed in recent years is the UAF Vision 2017 Plan. That plan presents a clear road map for the university to follow until 2017, when the university will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This vision plan includes significant detail relative to objectives, measurable activities, and budgetary implications and should provide much of the foundation for the campus strategic planning efforts in the near future.

Core Theme Planning, Effectiveness, and Improvement

The University of Alaska Fairbanks has identified *Educate*, *Discover*, *Prepare*, *Connect*, and *Engage* as its core themes. An analysis of these themes is provided below.

Educate

Educate is an obvious and primary theme for an institution such as UAF, though there are some indications that *Discover* may actually be the theme holding primacy at the institution. Nevertheless, *Educate* is important and the UAF Academic Plan 2007-12 asserts that, “The top priority of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks is to provide high quality education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.”

UAF is a fairly small institution, given its extensive mission and its large number of programs. Most educational programs – both baccalaureate and graduate - are modest in size. Based on an examination of a number of Program Reviews, the institution appears presently to have both the will and the resources to support a significant number of programs that would be considered too small to survive at many other institutions. In terms of mission elements that cross core themes, this approach seems to reflect a culture of commitment to broad educational opportunities for a small, widely dispersed population with equally widely varying interests and needs. The institution would likely benefit from monitoring the balance between meeting the diverse interests of its students and faculty and the sustainable resources of the university, in case that balance shifts in the future.

A series of UAF plans and planning activities have articulated and fleshed out the *Educate* theme, but it is not clear how they lead to or build on one another, and all of them pre-dated designation of the theme. The UA mission statement and the UA strategic plan appear to be the starting point on which UAF plans will be based in the future. A key planning factor will be the extent of the desire and ability of UAF to integrate core themes into the new strategic plan. UAF will likely want to apply their recent experience of evaluating the assessibility of multiple core theme indicators before deciding which to include, given the importance of having equally quantifiable metrics.

The UAF Academic Development Plan is intended to help guide the Annual Unit Plans, which must incorporate core themes, note accomplishments, and report on assessment of results. However, as an example of this process, it appears that a unit goal of significantly increasing the number of engineering graduates was largely based on direction from system officials and campus leadership which the college agreed to implement. That sequence of events does not suggest that the internal planning process was the key that led to setting that goal.

In another example, the College of Liberal Arts collaborated with UAA in one case, and with other units internally in another case to develop two PhD programs. In this example, it appears that the planning efforts focused on the *Educate* theme, with little explicit acknowledgement of the connections to the other core themes. However, given the timing of the establishment of core themes and the earlier planning associated with these doctoral programs, it is somewhat understandable that these connections to other core themes had not been fully developed.

Similar to other institutions, UAF is becoming increasingly sophisticated in its understanding and implementation of the assessment process, while continuing to be challenged to attain consistency in the quality of the process, as well as consistency in the ability of that process to generate improvement. The administrative review committee found that nearly all programs needed to improve their assessment processes. For example, a limited number of programs were using only indirect measures of student learning, but, on the other hand, there were no programs that were not measuring learning at all. Available evidence suggests that approximately 40% of programs did not document specific curricular improvements based on assessment of learning. However, some programs reported that their learning outcomes were consistently achieved, so they would not be expected to routinely report improvements.

It is too soon after the development of the core themes for direct assessment of the themes to have led to documented improvements. However, systematic uses of data and of assessing outcomes and programs have led to improvements in educational and support programs.

Discover

The *Discover* core theme, Discover: Through Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity including Emphasis on the North and its People, is an integral part of the mission of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The mission speaks to advancing and disseminating knowledge, especially focused on Alaska, the circumpolar North and their diverse peoples. Given the university's high level of research activity, the broad scholarship of its faculty and students, and the scholarship exhibited through performances, exhibits, and museums, the university is fulfilling the spirit of the *Discover* theme, especially in that a high proportion of its work is focused on Alaska and the circumpolar North and their people. In fact, the high proportion of research and creative work at the university that is focused on the North and its peoples is commendable. Seldom does one find a university that has clearly identified a niche as bold as this one and then implemented that decision so well. To be engaged in a high level of research activity and to have over 70% of the research expenditures allocated to this broad area is remarkable.

The research organization at UAF includes both independent research institutes and research and creative activity within the individual schools and colleges. It appears that this arrangement has been successful in stimulating development of a robust research enterprise, especially focused on the sciences and engineering. Whether or not this is the best model for stimulating integration among the five core themes chosen by UAF and for mission fulfillment might be a topic for vigorous discussion throughout the campus. It is apparent that this is a topic that is being discussed in areas such as Liberal Arts, but it is important in all parts of campus. A discussion of organizational models might assist in clarifying how the research and creativity activities of UAF would support, and be supported by, the other core theme activities.

In 2007 a unit level planning process was instituted to focus the attention of the schools/colleges and the research institutes on both short and long-term academic and research goals and progress toward them. This has enabled faculty and administrative assessment of where individual components of the research enterprise are headed, and what has been accomplished to date. However, it does not appear to have fostered integration across units nor was it at its inception focused on the core theme of *Discover* as an integral part of mission fulfillment. Proposed for FY

2012 is development of a formal research plan for the university, and if developed with integration across the core themes in mind, such a plan could go a long way toward showing how fulfillment of the *Discover* theme will be a significant component of fulfillment of the larger university mission in all of its facets.

The annual unit planning activities instituted in 2007 are a significant element for assessing the progress of the research and creative activity of the university. To the extent that these assessments and plans use verifiable data and lay out clear goals and activities for the coming year, they will allow objective assessment of annual and multiyear achievement. What these assessments and plans cannot do is provide a comprehensive picture of where the institution is going in research and creative activities relative to the core themes and mission; where opportunities exist for collaboration and synergy; and where investments could be made most productively. Processes for holistically assessing the research and creative activities of the university might be valuable assets for future planning and program development and for marketing the university and its capabilities.

Because the development of core themes and their relationship to planning within the university is in early stages of development, it currently is not clear how assessment information is being used to shape the selection of future research and creative activities, how it might affect resource allocation, or how it might lead to better integration across the five core themes.

UAF faces challenges in how to assess the productivity of creative activities and how to equitably provide resources for them. These appear to be significant issues for UAF and they will require considerable discussion and creativity to find the best solutions. Given that the university is currently wrestling with these issues, this is a positive sign of how these issues might be resolved, which could enhance the cohesion of faculty and staff across the campus, and the stature of the university.

An area of possible concern is the relationship between UAF's high level of research activity and graduate education. For a university research enterprise of over \$120 million dollars, the graduation rate of students earning masters and doctoral degrees appears to be low. As with any complex organization, productivity in one area might be high while in another it might be low, but one would expect the overall productivity would be commensurate with the level of potential support, especially given that education is a central purpose of the university. A review of the relationship of research and creative activity to graduate education might be a productive activity for UAF and could lead the way to greater integration across core themes, in this case *Educate* and *Discover*, on campus.

Finally, UAF is complimented for the stimulation of undergraduate research on campus. The allocation of resources to this activity demonstrates a commitment to increasing the research opportunities of undergraduates. Holding events such as an on-campus job fair at which undergraduate research opportunities are showcased is another indication of commitment. The kind of engagement of students that occurs through research and other co-curricular activities is one way to clearly integrate core themes such as *Educate* and *Discover*.

Prepare

The *Prepare* core theme was established to focus attention on UAF's preparation of Alaska's career, technical, and professional workforce for high-wage, high-demand job areas. This *Prepare* theme seems to be highly interrelated with the *Connect* and *Engage* themes, and it appears that the themes have somewhat overlapping goals. Some of the areas of emphasis initially identified in the *Prepare* theme are expanded and operationalized in related themes.

The *Prepare* theme incorporates three core objectives. These objectives are:

1. Prepare students for jobs in Alaska
2. Provide opportunities for incumbent workers to update job skills
3. Help secondary students prepare for postsecondary career pathways

Appropriate combinations of internal and external sources were used in the establishment and definition of this core theme. Internal sources included a UAF review of the current institutional mission utilizing focus groups and a committee focused on strategic issues. External sources included suggestions from advisory boards, data from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and specific information on the aging workforce.

The *Prepare* theme clearly flowed out of the institution's planning processes. Evidence of this connection included a core value in the UAF Strategic Plan 2010 document to promote sustainable living in the North. This focus was reemphasized in a recommendation of the UAF Vision 2017 Task Force Report that the university, "Develop and utilize relevant university-business partnerships at all levels, with an emphasis on meeting Alaska's needs in high-growth, high-demand occupations."

Minutes from advisory minutes and interviews support the view that there was a high degree of interaction between the university and the community in the development of this core theme. UAF is complimented for developing and fostering a significant number of community, educational, and industry partnerships to strengthen and implement programs that support this core theme. Significant donations of money, equipment, and human capital were noted in several areas. The Tech Prep agreements made for high school students in 17 different geographic regions and a comprehensive renovation of the Community and Technical College center also indicate significant commitment by UAF to the *Prepare* theme.

Interviews with all major constituencies at UAF suggest that there was a high level of satisfaction and participation in developing the institution's core themes. Key information was regularly distributed to all employees, and smaller organizational units solicited input for decision-making bodies. It is a positive step that one of the goals established for Deans and Directors is to include specific plans to incorporate core theme implementation into all Annual Unit Plans. The university is complimented for the thorough and inclusive process used to actively engage all UAF constituencies in the planning process.

It should be noted that the *Prepare* theme closely parallels the specific goals of the broader UA Academic Master Plan for all institutions in Alaska. The UA system established a three-tiered

approach to meet workforce needs by focusing on pre-college programs, career-based certificate and degree programs, and professional development courses for Alaska's workforce. Although the theme objectives listed by UAF are not unique, the complementary nature of their measures with those of the UA system should assist in facilitating this core theme implementation.

Appropriate external data appear to have been used to develop quantitative measures for outcomes for programs associated with this core theme. Pass rates and specific industry certifications assist in providing quantitative assessment, and UAF has been successful in reaching many initial targets. Additional measures may need to be developed for programs without these external measurements.

All programs related to the *Prepare* theme, as well as others across the university, were evaluated in the 2010 Program Review. Faculty volunteers and others contributed significant time and effort towards improvement of all of these identified programs. Some assessment efforts identified clear action plans that were subsequently addressed. However, this effort was not consistent across all program reviews and all action plans. In some cases, areas for improvement were identified in reports without also identifying specific improvement efforts that had been implemented or planned.

Available evidence seems to suggest that UAF will need to identify more specific measures and action plans to retain associate degree-seeking students in rural communities. The self-evaluation report was refreshingly candid in identifying problems with completion for certificate and associate programs, and it is recognized that graduation rates in areas that lead to immediate employment are often lower than other programs. However, specific, measureable, and public steps to increase retention and graduation rates in certificate and associate programs that have high enrollments but low completion rates were somewhat limited.

Connect

The stated focus of the *Connect* core theme is three-fold: 1) enduring, reciprocal and meaningful partnerships that enhance educational opportunity across Alaska; 2) access to academic opportunities that are responsive to the needs of Alaskan Natives, both urban and rural; and 3) preservation and dissemination of Alaska Native language and culture and rural development. This core theme is consistent with the mission of the university and its "emphasis on Alaska, the circumpolar North and their diverse peoples". The commitment to all of Alaska and its peoples is seen as a "moral imperative" across the institution and is reflected in this theme. However, there are varying administrative, staff and faculty views of the definition and execution of this core theme and its interrelationship with the other core themes.

The institution has articulated indicators for the three objectives of this core theme. These indicators are a mix of qualitative descriptions and quantitative indicators such as counting enrollments and graduates. The indicators would be strengthened with a greater emphasis on the measurable outcomes or demonstrated impact of the partnerships and programs. The qualitative objectives of the impact of the partnerships appear to require further refinement and hence substantive analysis is difficult. The data for the Alaska Native higher education access and the engagement of students in learning about Alaska Native language and culture and rural development provides a platform for the next cycle of planning.

The two indicators selected as measures of mission fulfillment are significant, lasting partnerships

that reflect shared responsibility and geographic distribution, and the graduation rates of Alaska Native and rural students in comparison to other students. Thresholds were identified for meeting mission expectations and the institution has demonstrated achievement of those expectations as defined.

Because of the timing of this full-scale evaluation relative to other UAF planning activities, the institution's comprehensive plan was established prior to the development of the core themes. This core theme is consistent with the institution's strategic plan, but it does not appear to be operationalized in the overall planning and budgeting process. At the college, department and program level, administrators, faculty and staff are beginning to consider the implications of the *Connect* core theme in planning and program decisions, but have not developed core theme plans which guide the selection and modification of enabling programs and services. Administrators expect the comprehensive planning incorporating core themes to follow the completion of this review.

The institutional analysis of the assessment data identifies programs and services such as new advising staff positions that are supporting improvement in these areas and other recruitment and retention programs to be explored in the quest for improvement. In addition, new academic programs or distance delivery of existing programs are being developed in response to the needs of rural Alaska and additional occupational programs such as construction trades will serve as an entry point for more Alaskans. This reflects the institutional commitment to deliver and fund academic programs and support student success through partnerships with the communities, personalized support of student learning, and localizing the content and pedagogy of the courses while achieving the same learning outcomes across all delivery sites and modalities. It is anticipated that more campus discussion and resolution will be necessary to better identify programs and delivery modes that will be most effective in achieving the objectives of this core theme.

The assessment of learning outcomes for courses and programs delivered through the College of Rural and Community Development is inconsistent in its implementation. Many of the learning outcomes focus on completion and graduation versus measurable learning outcomes. Although learning outcomes and plans for assessment are generally included in the assessment plans, the collection and analysis of outcome data and development of plans for improvement is not demonstrated across many programs. Despite a defined process and template for outcomes assessment that all programs are expected to follow and rubrics established for program review in this area, implementation of the learning outcomes assessment for degrees and courses is very inconsistent.

The College of Rural and Community Development is supported by a specific legislative appropriation, tuition and grant support as well as community contributions on its rural campuses and communities. Although there may be some unevenness in the funding of the campuses and a requirement that staff and faculty perform in multiple roles, there is generally adequate support based on the numbers of students served. However, federal support through Title III, TRIO and Alaska Native serving institutional grants represent a significant source of funding for several programs and future sustainability in a reduced resource environment is an institutional concern. In response, the Vice Chancellor has requested sustainability plans for all the campuses and programs and the college is considering future alternative options.

Engage

The UAF Vision 2017 Task Force Report (2008) documents the institution's initial planning efforts to formally acknowledge and promote community engagement and economic development activities. The *Engage* core theme evolved from the report findings and it embraces UAF's mission to serve Alaskans via lifelong learning, community development and economic development activities. This theme has included multiple campus groups and stakeholders in its development. The *Engage* theme objectives presented in the self-evaluation report include:

- Involve Alaskans in lifelong learning, cultural and athletic activities
- Communicate research-based knowledge and engage the public in defining priorities
- Promote positive youth development
- Collaborate with individuals, businesses, and agencies to diversity and grow local and state economies

The *Engage* theme, as currently developed, acknowledges UAF's Land, Sea and Space Grant status and relies heavily on indicators derived from exemplar programs, such as the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, and Marine Advisory Program (MAP), to establish quantitative indicators for engagement. UAF is to be complimented on its attempt to ground theme indicators in established practice. However, the indicators identified for the *Engage* theme to help define mission fulfillment do not encompass all of the theme objectives. Additionally, these indicators do not address the variety and scope of lifelong learning, community development and economic development activities of the university as evidenced in the outreach efforts of the Museum of the North, Rural College, College of Rural and Community Development (CRCDD) and Summer Sessions. The presently-established four *Engage* metrics focus on narrowly defined quantitative indicators for just two of the *Engage* objectives. The university candidly acknowledges that the *Engage* core theme needs additional refinement. Specifically, UAF intends to elaborate on economic development activities and further develop appropriate quantitative and qualitative metrics.

The volume and variety of examples of how students, faculty, staff and administrators interact with and engage the local community and region are staggering. UAF is clearly committed to serving Alaskans, and UAF is highly complimented for its efforts in this arena.

Given the newness of the concept of core themes in relation to this full-scale evaluation, it is unrealistic to expect a well-developed and systematic assessment of core themes to be in place. UAF is complimented for its initial attempt to establish an evaluation rubric, yet it is challenged to

continue ongoing discussion and systematic collection and analysis of meaningful, assessable and verifiable data. The chosen indicators of non-credit program participation and partnership development demonstrate early success in quantifying meaningful data. The volume, variety and quality of current *Engage* activities serve as evidence of how important this theme is to all university stakeholders, and how important this theme is to differentiating UAF from other Alaskan higher education institutions. The university's challenge is to further develop meaningful ways to assess its success in achieving the intended outcomes of the *Engage* theme. To do so will require further refinement of objectives and indicators. It is too early in the implementation of core themes to evaluate how core theme assessments inform and influence planning and decision making. This is clearly an area of future work at UAF.

Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability

Mission Fulfillment

The University of Alaska Fairbanks has appropriately defined mission fulfillment through the accomplishment of its core theme objectives, and it continues to monitor the extent to which it is fulfilling its mission through thoughtful assessment and improvement processes. As the state's land grant university, UAF is keenly aware of the high expectations by a broad range of constituencies to provide educational, research and outreach programs which serve the entire state and its diverse peoples. That breadth of mission is obviously challenging, but it is one that UAF has clearly embraced. The university is justifiably proud of its achievements in serving the state of Alaska in multiple roles, and its ongoing efforts are focused on fulfilling those mission elements into the future.

In addition to serving the state through the traditional land grant university activities, UAF has assumed a leading role as a driver of statewide economic development. All of the core themes have some element of economic development associated within its framework, but the *Prepare*, *Connect* and *Engage* themes are particularly noteworthy in their relationship to diversifying Alaska's economy and positioning the state in the future for a more sustainable economic base.

One of the more challenging aspects of assessing mission fulfillment is the ability to view the university in a holistic fashion, rather than solely individual analysis of the constituent core themes. UAF is cognizant of this challenge and it appears that planning and improvement processes are poised to assess the institution using this more robust approach. A key element in such an approach will likely be the university's ability to prioritize its activities and initiatives in recognition that it 'cannot be all things to all people', despite the breadth of its mission.

Adaptation and Sustainability

There is substantial evidence that UAF regularly evaluates the adequacy of its resources, capacity, and effectiveness of its operations in an ongoing assessment of fulfilling its mission. Those processes are informed with data compiled by Planning, Analysis and Institutional Research (PAIR). That data is widely disseminated to all appropriate constituent groups.

Given the geographic distribution of its programs and services and its use of distance technologies, UAF makes a special effort to help ensure that program goals and outcomes are achieved wherever offered and however delivered. The Program Review in FY11 is a prime example in which UAF assesses its planning, assessment, and resource allocation periodically. Whether or not this level of institutional self-evaluation continues in the future will likely be an ongoing issue for UAF.

Despite the positive attributes of UAF's planning and evaluation processes, there is little evidence to suggest that the university has substantially incorporated core theme planning into its budgeting and resource allocation processes. Given the relative newness of the identification and explication of the core themes, this lack of integration and alignment of existing processes with core theme objectives is somewhat understandable. However, it appears that a significant issue in the future for

UAF will be its ability to modify its institutional processes, and particularly resource allocation, such that they align with core theme objectives and help ensure mission fulfillment.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks appropriately monitors its internal and external environment and utilizes this information in helping to define its future direction. An annual Performance Report addresses UAF's performance on major UA System metrics, and describes strategies for institutional improvement. Some of the issues identified in the performance report include strategies for increased state financial aid for students; increased transfer and international recruiting; and increased student retention efforts. If these efforts are successful and enrollment growth continues at a significant rate, UAF will be challenged to maintain adequacy of instructional and student support services.

An additional looming issue for UAF is the adequacy of its physical infrastructure and the magnitude of deferred maintenance of its facilities. This issue appears to be a major constraint on the university's research enterprise, as well as impacting other elements of its mission. UAF is very aware of the significance of this issue, and campus and system leaders have made this topic a top priority in the legislative process. Institutional relevancy, productivity, viability, and sustainability will all be greatly affected by how well UAF addresses this issue in the future.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks continues to perform admirably in identifying current and emerging patterns and trends in order to assess its strategic position and help define its future. Among the key factors impacting UAF in the future will be the eventual decline in state tax revenues that depend upon oil and gas production; the demographic shift of the state's population base to Southcentral Alaska, which impacts legislative representation; and the increased risk of the loss of some external research funding due to national deficit reduction strategies. Despite these challenges, UAF appears to be well-positioned to adapt to a changing fiscal, political and societal environment in which its focus will continue to be on promoting academic excellence, student success and lifelong learning in service to Alaska, the circumpolar North and their diverse peoples.

Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. The Evaluation Committee commends UAF for the thorough and inclusive nature of their development of institutional Core themes involving a broad range of UAF constituencies and their deliberative identification of measurable indicators and objectives that help define Mission fulfillment.
2. The Evaluation Committee commends UAF for their continuing, unwavering commitment to serving native and rural populations across the state through effective educational programming that is responsive to local community and state needs. That commitment also includes the collaborative establishment and operation of community partnerships that help sustain Alaska's rural economy.
3. In recognition of UAF's unique location in the circumpolar North, the Evaluation Committee commends the institution for the depth and breadth of its activities focused around Alaska, the circumpolar North and their diverse peoples that encompass high quality educational, research and outreach programs.

Recommendations

1. The Evaluation Committee recommends that UAF coordinate its planning and evaluation processes of Core themes in a systematic manner to help ensure that the institution's programs and services align with the accomplishment of the Core themes' objectives. (Standard 3.B.1 and 3.B.2 - Core Theme Planning, and Standard 4.A.1 - Assessment)
2. The Evaluation Committee recommends that UAF evaluate its resource allocation processes and institutional capacity relative to its Core themes' objectives to help ensure adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of its programs and services (Standard 5.B.2 - Adaptation and Sustainability)
3. The Evaluation Committee recommends that UAF systematically implement and execute its educational assessment plan to consistently achieve identified program and degree learning outcomes and that assessment results be used to guide program improvement. (Standard 4.A.3 - Assessment)