

Expedited Administrative Management Structure Review Report

Requested by the Governance Coordinating Committee to provide an opportunity for review of UAF's administrative structure and executive positions.

Submitted on
March 29, 2021

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Overarching Concerns, Observations, and Recommendations:

1. Last year's Expedited Administrative Review Committee (EARC) strongly recommended the advancement of more shared services on campus. We affirm the conclusion of the EARC and believe ***there is still room for efficiencies through shared services***. Affected units and staff should have a voice in creation of and movement to shared services as this model has been the most successful in the past. We also believe that shared services should remain on campus rather than be centralized at the statewide level.
2. The committee would like to re-emphasize that the current UAF objectives and mission are too broad for the resources available. Last year's EARC recommended ***that the UAF Mission and Vision Statements, and priorities be revised to reflect new budget constraints***. Our committee affirms that recommendation. While we recognize the difficulty of cuts reducing the scope of an institution's activities (such as vertical cuts), the committee felt strongly that realistic priorities must be established to preserve the core strengths of the university, in particular the academic mission of UAF. Employees across the system are often responsible for the duties of what was formerly two or even three positions. If one person leaves or takes time off, there is no one to cover for that position. There was fear by many committee members that critical services (including essential functions such as admissions, records maintenance, advising, research staff support, and others) are on the edge of failure.
3. We recommend that ***each major unit overseen by a vice chancellor be reviewed to assure that the organization's structure and personnel align with the functions of that unit***. There were some units in particular where many questions were raised about whether the current structure effectively supports the functions of the unit (see comments on individual units below). Those units should be prioritized in a review of the overall organizational and management structure at UAF. Questions frequently came up during our review about why certain structures, positions, and reporting lines exist. Often the answers were a legacy or that positions/structures were created to deal with conflicts or problems. We were not tasked with doing detailed unit reviews nor were we provided with the information necessary to complete such reviews, but we believe that unit reviews should be conducted to identify more logical reporting lines, possible mergers, and efficiencies. Positions should be evaluated, and if appropriate, modified to increase efficiency or to enhance mission centrality. The committee was split on the best choice for conducting the reviews. Many members felt that there should be internally selected review committees, but others argued for external and independent review panels so that the reviews could take advantage of best practices at other institutions and reduce the effects of internal biases.
4. Research units are split in reporting to either the VCR or the Provost. The reasons seem to be largely historical, based on trends when the units were formed. Research units were either placed in colleges or created as stand-alone units. We ***question if the current structure best supports both UAF's research program and its academic mission***.

We recommend a group, external to the structures, be tasked with determining if a more consistent structure would be beneficial to UAF going forward. At a minimum, **the committee felt strongly that the Vice Chancellor for Research should be linked to and be a resource for all research and scholarly activity at UAF, not just research activity that brings in external funding.** Possible outcomes of a structural review are more units merged into colleges, research units moved out of colleges, or status quo.

5. While there was strong and vocal support on the committee for Goal #2 in UAF's *Strategic Planning Goals 2019-2025* to "solidify our global leadership in Alaska Native and indigenous programs", the committee questioned whether the current structure including five directors and two deans reporting to the **Vice Chancellor of Rural, Community and Native Education is the most efficient and effective in terms of academic structure and student success.** A re-evaluation of this unit is timely as other on-going efforts such as the "UAF Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence" and the "UA Regents Alaska Native Success Initiative" can be used as resources to provide direction for change and growth. A possible re-structure is also timely as there are currently a number of unfilled and interim positions in this unit.
6. The committee found it difficult to evaluate some positions in the absence of criteria that would provide guidance on why a position is classified as EX. The committee further felt that there is a lack of consistency in what positions are classified as EX positions. The committee recommends that criteria be developed to **establish transparent guidelines for EX positions** and that there be a review of EX positions to ensure fairness across the system.
7. Outreach is integral to the mission of UAF. However, a focused structure for utilizing outreach as a mechanism to engage or connect with the community has not been incorporated. The advantage of a focused effort may bear fruits in terms of stronger recognition of and support for UAF by the community. The committee observed that there are many outreach programs across campus, some as stand-alone units and some reporting through a dean or director. The committee also observed that the lack of coordination of these outreach programs and activities leads to the efforts being undervalued and under measured. Recognizing that some work has already been done on "outward facing activities" at UAF, **the committee recommends continuing those efforts toward a combined outreach unit** to both make outreach activities more widely recognized and to gain efficiencies through shared services. It may be prudent for the Chancellor to first develop a structural plan for this major outreach unit. After that step, all the combined outreach units should be involved in developing the working structure of the unit.

Introduction:

The recently appointed director of the Centers for Disease Control reputedly has a sign on her desk that says: "Hard things are hard". That is perhaps a fitting saying for the difficult budget situation faced by UAF, which was a significant factor prompting this review. A common theme in the committee's discussions was that the current UAF mission is too broad to accomplish with the available resources. Employee burnout is a huge problem as people are asked to do more and more work with less and less support due to the severe budget cuts and employee loss at UAF. Several committee members strongly expressed that "we need to do a much better job of prioritizing and making vertical cuts". There was a significant amount of fear expressed by committee members that failure to reduce UAF's scope of activities will lead to catastrophic failures as the system is stretched to the limit in many areas.

The types of cuts that would be tied to a reduction in scope are hard to make but there was a strong sentiment that it is time, or perhaps past time, for making some of those decisions and for a thoughtful review of the way UAF is structured. Even modest changes should be seriously considered. The committee recognizes that there have been significant reductions in administrative positions, at least from the early 2000's, but a great deal has changed since then. Some of the changes recommended in this report would likely not be suggested in a better budget climate. But some would be. There was an overall observation that some of UAF's administrative structure appears to be a result of historical decisions and positions being designed to fit individuals rather than individuals fitting into positions. We need to clearly define key functions and make sure the organizational structure supports those key functions. Within this context we have provided observations and recommendations for UAF in general (overarching recommendations) and for each of the six major units we reviewed. We hope the observations, questions, and recommendations from this process will provide direction for a path forward.

Review Approach:

As stated in the charge to the committee "The purpose of expedited administrative management review is to provide an opportunity for input to UAF's administrative structure... the review committee will advise the Chancellor as to improvements that might be made to administrative management position/structure and to the extent possible, contribute to budget savings. Additionally, the committee should assess the extent to which each administrator works on issues that affect the entire statewide system, including the system office."

The committee reviewed 58 positions classified as EX or FR. We were provided with reports for each position submitted by the person serving in that position at this time. The reports were to include (1) a job description, (2) primary short-term responsibilities or initiatives of the position, (3) primary long-term responsibilities or initiatives of the position, (4) manner in which the position engages with peers across the UA system, including similar positions at the system office, (5) nature of non-administrative responsibilities (for positions less than 100% administrative) including the average percentage of effort funded by unrestricted funds or other

types of funds, (6) number of employees in unit for which the position has responsibility, and (7) significance of the position to UAF and the unit. The quality of the reports we received was inconsistent, with some reports being more complete than others. And in many cases, there were variable interpretations of what was being asked. For example, many people created a job description rather than providing the official job description. We were later provided official job descriptions for many of the positions but apparently there are no longer records of the formal job descriptions for some of the positions. Some reports we received for positions that are only part-time administrative were clear in stating the percent work dedicated to administration, while other reports did not clearly provide that information. Similarly, the information on work conducted that affects the entire system was inconsistent. The variability in the data complicated the review process and made it difficult to impossible to address the issue in our charge of how much work is done by the positions we reviewed on issues that affect the entire statewide system. Thus, we are unfortunately unable to complete that part of our charge. We also varied from our directive by only listing positions which we questioned as opposed to rating each position.

After a few shifts in committee members in the first few weeks of the review process, the active members of the committee included Joan Braddock, Dean, Emerita (chair); Amber Leytem, Office of Management and Budget, and Lillian Anderson-Misel, Geophysical Institute (administrator representatives and non-voting members); Kara Axx, Division of Design and Construction, Juella Sparks, Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension, and Karen Mallette, Facilities Services (staff representatives); Leah Berman, College of Natural Science and Mathematics, Debu Misra, College of Engineering and Mines, and Sabine Siekmann, College of Liberal Arts (faculty representatives). In addition, Julie Maier, Community and Technical College (faculty alternate) and Shannon Watson, Alaska EPSCoR (staff alternate) attended meetings and actively participated. Two students and an alternate were assigned to the committee but did not participate.

The committee met an average of once per week from December 10, 2020 through March 26, 2021 (with a break during the December holidays). The initial approach was to divide the list of positions (EX and FR) into six groups of similar positions (e.g., deans, primary research directors). Subgroups of committee members reviewed positions in each of the groups flagging positions and units for further discussion. The initial review identified three major units and a group of positions for further review. However, that process ended up only providing a starting point for a deeper look at UAF's overall administrative structure.

By mid-January the committee re-focused its approach to look broadly at UAF's administrative structure and then review how specific positions fit into that structure. Data provided to the committee included position reports for all EX and FR positions to be evaluated, organizational charts, and data available from other sources such as the *UAF Factbook*, *UAF in Review*, and *UA in Review*. Individual committee members self-selected into sub-groups to review the five units led by vice chancellors with a sixth subgroup to review the positions that are direct reports to the chancellor. In the process of reviewing a specific unit, each subgroup reviewed the EX and FR positions within that unit. The major observations and recommendations from each

subgroup were brought to the whole committee for further discussion and buy-in. Observations and recommendations with majority support by the whole committee are summarized in this report. In a few cases observations and suggestions made by subgroups but not endorsed by the full group were included to capture several more “out-of-the-box” ideas.

Observations and Recommendations by Unit:

1. VC for Rural, Community and Native Education

Observations and Concerns

The committee came up with a lengthy list of questions and observations about the VCRCNE unit that should be considered in determining if the current structure is optimal for achieving UAF's mission. Some of the major questions and observations are included below.

- The major question that arose during this review was whether or not the current VCRCNE/CRCDC/CTC structure operating as a separate branch of the institution, is the most efficient in terms of cost, and more importantly, is the most effective in terms of academic structure and student success.
- The executive dean for CRCDC was given the additional title of Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education in 2006; subsequently, an additional dean of CRCDC position was created reporting to the VCRCNE. The mission of the VCRCNE position clearly is central to UAF's mission, but it is not clear whether the current position/structure is successfully meeting UAF's goals. Does having the VC position enhance student and faculty success? Is there a more effective way to make Alaska Native education central to the UAF mission that does not involve a separate VC-level administrator? How can we measure the effectiveness of the position, and what measurements have been done so far?
- Why was the executive dean function separated from the vice chancellor position? Was there significant growth in either role? If so, how? Is there duplication or overlap between the VCRCNE, CRCDC Dean and CTC Dean?
- Why/how does the VC "lead the community college mission at UAF"? What is the role of the deans in the community college mission? The deans of other units are the academic leaders of those units. Does having the community college structure separate from the rest of the university best serve our students? How much of the separate structure of CRCDC is a legacy of the merger between the previous community college structure into UA? Given the now-combined unions, does this structure still make sense? What is the impact of having academic programs that do not report to the provost? Would combining the deans of CTC and CRCDC into one dean position reporting to the provost free up the VC position to act more broadly?
- Do we really need five separate full-time campus directors? The committee recognizes that some of the structure is related to historic Title III funding. How much of the current Title III funding requires a full-time director position at each branch campus? Importantly, we note that Chukchi Campus has a director but only a few adjunct faculty and few students. Could this unit be combined with another campus?
- Does UAF have data on the number of students who start at a community campus and then complete a degree elsewhere at UAF? This should be considered success, but it is not measured through degree completion statistics.
- The VC supports the Chancellor's Advisory Council on Native Education – this group is listed on the Chancellor's page but there is no documentation of meetings or initiatives.

Is this group active? Who are its members? Could this group's charge be expanded to fulfill the larger mission of the VC, with the dean(s) providing leadership for academic programs?

Recommendations

- Re-evaluate the role of the VCRCNE and the current structure of this unit. The committee recommends an analysis of whether the current structure is the best structure to make Alaska Native education and ways of knowing central to the UAF mission. The committee recognizes the need for leadership and advocacy for Alaska Native students at a high level. But the committee also felt strongly that the duties of the position be re-evaluated in light of the committee's further recommendations regarding academic programs (see recommendations below).
- The committee recommends a new reporting structure in which all academic programs report to the Provost. In this model, there would be a single dean overseeing all the academic programs who would report to the provost, like the other academic deans. This re-structure would be consistent with the other two universities in the system and would consolidate academics at UAF.
- The committee had concerns about the community campus director positions. There have been significant challenges in recruiting people to serve in these positions and there has been high turnover. In addition, the committee noted a lack of full-time faculty at many of the campuses and felt that it was time to evaluate whether we really need five separate full-time campus directors. In particular, the committee recommends combining the Chukchi with one of the other rural campuses under one director. Currently the Chukchi campus has a director but no regular faculty and few students.
- The committee also recommends that a permanent task force be established as part of the implementation of the UA Regents Initiative's five-year plan to ensure success in solidifying our global leadership in Alaska Native and Indigenous programs.

2. VC for Student Affairs

Observations and Concerns

As part of our review of this unit, we compared the current organizational chart to that from 2012. Not unexpectedly, we noted quite a few changes. However, the committee questioned whether some of the changes should be reconsidered to effectively meet UAF's current needs. Some observations include:

- There are now two associate vice chancellors, instead of one.
- International programs, career services, upward bound and athletics have all been moved to other major units (or in the case of athletics, as a direct report to the chancellor). The committee notes that many of these changes were made prior to the current VC coming to UAF and do not mean to reflect on current leadership but rather to indicate changes made previously to the scope of the position.
- In the current structure, the vice chancellor only has three direct reports, the two associate vice chancellors and an administrative assistant. All other positions report through one of the associate vice chancellors.

- The current unit structure in general is not as logical to the committee as the structure from 2012.
- There have been a lot of changes in the unit with respect to reporting and personnel turnover. The structure needs to be examined to determine whether it contributes to issues of turnover and whether it is the best one in terms of efficiency in promoting student recruiting and success.

Recommendations

- Unit should be evaluated for efficiency in structure. It seems odd for the Vice Chancellor to have so few direct reports. There does not seem to be need for more than one associate vice chancellor in this unit. The committee recommends re-structuring so that there is one associate vice chancellor. The committee felt that a logical structure would be to have the Associate Vice Chancellor oversee auxiliary services within the unit with the other functions reporting directly to the Vice Chancellor but there may be other options that could be considered.
- The committee recommends retaining the current focus on enrollment management. Recruiting and retaining students is particularly critical at this time.
- The committee recommends assessing how to revitalize and strengthen the Dean of Students position in order to serve students and faculty better. This is a key position supporting both students and faculty.
- The committee suggests considering having dining services included with other service contracts under the purview of the VCAS.

3. VC for Administrative Services

Observations and Concerns

- The overall impression from the data provided to our committee is that the VCAS unit appears to be reasonably efficient and logically organized.
- But the committee raised several questions about this unit including:
 - How does UAF follow up with and evaluate privatization to determine effectiveness?
 - As for other units, the committee asked how positions are identified for EX distinction? It would be more equitable if HR had published guidelines for EX positions.

Recommendations

- Consider merging or reorganizing all remaining business offices at UAF into three specific categories (administrative, research and academic) and have the units report to the VCAS.
 - It is recognized that units need to retain executive officer and/or fiscal officer positions within the unit.
 - It is further recognized that HR and travel have already been centralized, procurement has been partly centralized, and grants are in the planning process

of centralization, which is why those functions were not included in this recommendation.

- Consider evaluating the Fire Chief and EHSRM positions as to why neither are executive level when the Police Chief position is EX. There may be inequity in determining who is executive and who is not. Criteria need to be established across the system for EX positions.
- While UAF cannot control system-wide requests, the committee recommends working as much as possible with statewide to ensure that data requests are as reasonable as possible and that there is sufficient warning and time allowed for completion of unique requests.

4. VC for Research

Observations and Concerns

- As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the reporting lines for research units are inconsistent across campus. The committee questioned whether the current structure is effectively serving the entire research enterprise of the university. Some very large research enterprises (e.g., IMS, INE) report through a dean to the provost while others (e.g., GI, IAB) report directly to the VCR. Smaller units may be stand-alone or may report through a director or dean. The structure decreases opportunities for efficiencies and collaboration, and is at the least confusing.
- There are quite a number of research directors of all levels across campus. The committee questioned whether some consolidations could be made to increase efficiency and likelihood of collaborations.
- The committee had a lively discussion (but did not reach consensus) about a bold change that would create a new VCREGS (Vice Chancellor for Research, Extension and Graduate Studies). In this model all research, extension and graduate studies will be under one umbrella. The subcommittee who brought this idea forward felt that the synergy would assist in the goal of UAF becoming a Tier-1 university. While the broader committee felt this option could be explored in a review of research reporting lines across campus, there was strong sentiment among many committee members that the graduate school should remain under the purview of the Provost at this time. Because the committee did not reach consensus on this possible change, we leave it as an idea to consider rather than a recommendation.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the structure of the research enterprise at UAF be re-evaluated as consistent with recommendations in other parts of this report. Members of the subgroup that reviewed this unit favored having all research entities on campus report to the VCR. However, other members of the broader committee felt that more review was needed before determining the best structure for UAF.
- As was noted in last year's review by the EARC, there needs to be a careful review of all research units on campus to assure that each meets the criteria used recently for establishing a new research unit (e.g., need, opportunity, leadership, and sufficient

unrestricted revenue). Over time, some of the criteria may no longer be met by a specific unit. The committee noted that there are a lot of individual research units, and that efficiencies might be gained through consolidations of administrative functions. The subcommittee provided a list of recommended unit consolidations, but others questioned whether or not our committee had the information available to us to make the best decision on units that might exist under a shared administrative structure.

5. Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost:

Observations and Concerns

- We note that some of the research units (e.g., IANRE, UA Museum) report directly to the provost; some research units (e.g., IMS, INE, WERC) report through an academic dean to the provost, and some research units (e.g., GI, IAB, IARC) do not report to the provost at all, despite all these research units having both bipartite research faculty and tripartite faculty.
- Summer Sessions provides significant high-profile community outreach opportunities in addition to scheduling synchronous courses during summer sessions, Wintermester, and Maymester. Currently, colleges and schools receive tuition from summer sessions classes, but there is no coordination around teaching expectations, or salary for summer teaching, and summer teaching is totally separate from normal workloads.
- The committee discussed possible changes to Summer Sessions in light of increased numbers of students taking classes through eCampus and other factors. However, the committee recognizes that there is still a significant need for in-person summer courses, particularly to support veterans and others needing in person courses, and that Summer Sessions has provided a broad range of activities beyond course offerings that bring people to campus in the summer. However, the committee also recognizes that the current model for Summer Sessions is in jeopardy due to budget constraints. There was strong sentiment on the committee, that whatever model is used for Summer Sessions, there must be someone responsible for coordination of the course offerings.
- eCampus has taken on significant duties in faculty development and faculty support in addition to the support they are providing for some asynchronous distance courses. If needed, could eCampus pick up the additional responsibility of coordinating the academic portion of the Summer Sessions?
- The committee expressed concern that placing the School of Education in CNSM is not a good fit and has not been shown to be in the best interests of students.
- In reviewing positions reporting to the Provost and the overall structure of UAF, some committee members pointed out that it is not unusual at other institutions for the graduate school to be administered under a VCR. However, most on the committee felt, at this point in time, that the graduate school should remain under the supervision of the Provost.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the structure of the research enterprise at UAF be re-evaluated, by an independent group, as consistent with recommendations in other parts of this report.

- We recommend that the School of Education be moved out of CNSM and that the director report directly to the provost.

6. Chancellor Direct Reports:

Observations and Concerns

- The athletics program at UAF, while having many supporters (including members of this committee) is costly, often does not directly support many Alaskan students, and has struggled to deal with compliance issues. The committee raised a number of questions that have apparently been addressed in other reviews such as the financials, outside support (both financial and in attendance at events), origin of athletes, numbers who remain in Alaska, and others. In the current budget climate, the committee felt that athletics needs to be re-evaluated before making additional academic program cuts.
- The committee observed that the position of Executive Officer for UAF is relatively recent (about 2014), was created largely to address a specific large initiative, and has only inconsistently existed since then. The position was re-established under the current chancellor. While the committee was sympathetic to the scope of the chancellor's current responsibilities, the committee questioned whether the position is sustainable in a time of such severe budget cuts.

Recommendations

- The committee recommends the position of executive officer be eliminated and other solutions for assisting with special projects be pursued.
- With some sadness, the committee recommends elimination of the athletics program. It is not reasonable to continue to eliminate academic programs without cutting the athletics budget and program. Some of the savings could be re-directed toward increased opportunities for student team sports and recreation. The staff labor cost of the athletics is more than just the athletic program itself as other entities such as the Registrar's office, advising staff, and others also support athletics directly and indirectly. The severity of the budget cuts makes seriously considering this recommendation imperative.

Additional Concerns/Comments

- The committee was concerned that budget cuts in colleges not only hamper the colleges' productivity but cuts leading to reduced support for graduate students is also harmful to UAF's research mission. This is particularly concerning when UAF has a stated goal of achieving Tier-1 status.
- The committee discussed the fact that colleges, in some cases with many joint faculty, do not get support from the research overhead brought in by those faculty. But the committee also recognized that the research institutes have become more and more reliant on ICR as their state funding has been reduced. The committee felt that colleges

should benefit in some way from the ICR but did not believe that the portion returned to research institutes should be decreased.

- As indicated in this report, the committee spent quite a bit of time discussing the research administrative structure at UAF. In that discussion the issue of joint appointments was raised. The system was workable in the past when there was more money but has always caused supervisory challenges and tension. As funds get more stretched it is not clear that the current system is sustainable. To maintain UAF's research success, any changes to the structure must actively support recruiting, retaining, and motivating faculty.