

UAF Faculty Senate President's Final Report

I'd like to begin by thanking everyone for two years as President of UAF's Faculty Senate. If there is one thing that I have learned it is that the Senate only works as a team, and all of you have been a great team. For shared governance to function everyone has to be engaged and have a voice, you've all been engaged and used your voice. We've made shared governance work at UAF, and have played a role in guiding this institution toward a bright future.

Every team needs leaders and facilitators, and I would like to thank one in particular, Prof. Cathy Cahill. Without her unwavering support as a President-Elect, this would have been a difficult time for all of us. She will be an excellent Faculty Senate President, and I know as well that Prof. Jennifer Reynolds will continue in this tradition. The future for the Faculty Senate is a bright one indeed with our active Senators and excellent facilitators guiding the discussion. Finally I would like to thank Jayne Harvie, without whose tireless efforts chaos would surely have reigned.

Over the past two years we've seen a lot of change at UAF and UA. I'd like to recount some of those changes and the role the Senate has played. From my own experience as a faculty member and a senator, it was often not clear what the roles of the President and President-Elect are, aside from presiding over the meetings. The answer is simple, many more meetings, but primarily we become the facilitators of change, and help our Provost and Chancellor in representing UAF at the system-wide level. After leaving the Senate floor, many of our motions pass through the Chancellor and Provost, and go to Statewide committees for approval at higher levels. Particularly new academic programs and UA-wide policy issues. Having faculty present at the table all the way to the final approval by the Board of Regents has been new, and truly given the faculty a voice at all levels. We truly have shared governance at the University of Alaska.

The faculty Senate President-Elect, President, and Past-President represent the University on the Faculty Alliance. One of the 9 representatives chairs that group, and represents the Alliance and therefore all faculty at the Systemwide Academic Council, the President's Cabinet and the Board of Regents meetings. I chaired the Alliance from 2009-2010, and will continue to serve next year as past-President. The Faculty Alliance has proven repeatedly that the faculty across UA are united, and we've made great strides in making sure that the academic mission of UA stays in the forefront. Nearly every decision at UA is examined through how it affects that mission and the faculty student relationship.

In the last two years, the UAF Faculty Senate will have passed 66 motions, with about a dozen more sent back to committee for review. This Senate has been an attentive one, and has made sure that every motion was ready before passing. There has been very lively discussion on the Senate floor, and even the difficult moments were rewarding. Of the motions, 9 of them were to update unit criteria for promotion and tenure, 6 of them to approve a new program or certificate, with one of those to remove a program. We've passed 4 resolutions in that time, mostly of appreciation for service to the senate, but also

to make recommendations in places where the Senate has no authority, but often should still have a voice. Even beyond the legislation of the Senate, we've had an impact in all facets of UAF's and UA's missions.

One of the first things taken care of by the Senate in Summer of 2009 was to pass a motion encouraging President Hamilton to forego a national search and name Brian Rogers Chancellor. Fortunately President Hamilton did so, and Chancellor Rogers has been a strong advocate for the Faculty and the Senate. He and Provost Henrichs have made it possible for the Faculty to gain more seats on the Systemwide Academic Council and recently on the President's Cabinet preceding every Board of Regents meeting. We are indebted to both of them for their support, and I would like to personally thank them both for their efforts.

On the Systemwide scale I served as the only faculty member on the President's Search Advisory Committee to help guide the Board of Regents in the selection of our new University President, Pat Gamble.

As a member of the Faculty Alliance, with Cathy Cahill and Jennifer Reynolds from UAF, I helped to redraft the Academic Master Plan into a short pamphlet, while preserving the details of the plan for an operational document for the Systemwide Academic Council. The council had created a very detailed document, in no small part through the wisdom of our Provost, that paves the way for smoother relationships between all branches of the University of Alaska while keeping an eye on the academic mission. This was a difficult task that took years and literally dozens of individuals, and the faculty at UAF, through the Senate and its leadership from 2007 to present have all had an important role.

Currently the focus systemwide has been to raise academic standards and bring them in alignment across the University of Alaska, and here UAF has lead the way by taking the initiative at the local level by raising the requirements for core classes, transfers, and handling incomplete grades.

At UAF the Senate has been successful at many levels. We've increased our numbers through the reapportionment efforts led by the Faculty Affairs Committee and brought to fruition with many bylaws changes by Jennifer Reynolds and Anne Christie. This effort improved the representation of the research institutions, and merged well with the formation of the ad hoc Advisory Research Committee, which has become the permanent Research Advisory Committee filling a need to have faculty play a role in research policy at UAF.

We've supported and contributed to campus-wide efforts at defining our themes for the upcoming accreditation, as well as the assessment standards for our core curriculum all the way to individual courses.

We've addressed issues with e-learning, and currently have formed a local committee chaired by Orion Lawlor to support the e-learning task force of the Faculty Alliance to set

guidelines for best practices to best deliver laboratory courses to students on campus and at distance.

We've been supportive of shared governance at all levels, from students to staff to systemwide councils. We supported student efforts for a Graduate Student Committee as part of the Associated Students of UAF and their first conference last Fall to help introduce graduate students to life and research at UAF. We've shared legislation between each group, coordinating efforts on matters from leave sharing, to health care to grading standards.

Not all of the tasks have been simple, and there have been many difficult dialogs. Problematic issues like the brief transition to a completely online Bookstore, the absence of Union representation for the faculty at the Senate and continued challenges with keeping information technology in tune with the faculty and student needs have often come before the Senate. In the case of the Bookstore, the Senate played a role to give the Faculty a voice to return UAF to a brick and mortar store in addition to the online options, because this best fit the needs of our students.

We have enjoyed over the last year regular interaction with our Unions through improved representation on the Senate, and would like to acknowledge Jordan Titus and Jane Weber for their efforts to keep the Senate engaged in Union matters.

Finally, information technology issues have always been a challenge, but efforts have been made to streamline the decision making process at UAF and UA, and keep UAF in particular at the forefront of new technologies.

In conclusion, serving on the Senate has been a rewarding experience. It takes a great commitment, and certainly can disrupt the missions of teaching and research that make up the majority of our efforts. However, service also plays a role, and serving on the Faculty Senate is the best way to make the service component of our efforts integral to every mission of the University. I thank you all for your support over two years, and leave the Senate knowing it will meet success in the future.

Jon Dehn