

UAF Faculty Senate President's Statement Regarding draft Academic Master Plan

It is an important stage in the growth of a university system to develop an Academic Master Plan (AMP). For a plan to be meaningful it has to have the support of the entire university community. Other universities worldwide have struggled with the creation of their plan. Typically it takes years to formulate one. Our Board of Regents tasked UA with the creation of a plan shortly after appointment of our new Vice-President of Academic Affairs in the Fall of 2008. A charge was drafted by the Statewide Academic Council (SAC) and the Faculty Alliance (FA). This charge was approved by the Board of Regents and work began in earnest on the AMP itself. Because many of the issues were contentious between MAUs, SAC wisely chose to create a solid framework of the plan before gathering input from the faculty. It was at this point, deciding when the framework was ready, where SAC and FA came into a disagreement. The time line and process in the charge collapsed, and faculty did not see a version of the plan until version 16 in the Summer of 2009. At that time the FA made several suggestions, many of which were incorporated into the plan. However at this time the plan languished while some issues between larger MAU goals could not be resolved. Eventually the plan was brought before the President's Cabinet, who were able to move the plan forward. A year behind schedule, the FA reported to the Board of Regents (see attached) and passed a motion to SAC (see attached) requesting the release of the document to the faculty, most importantly the Faculty Senates. These efforts were successful, the draft document has been released and is attached to the Faculty Senate agenda for meeting 165. It is also being distributed to other university groups, primarily through Provost Henrichs office.

At this time I would like to thank Provost Henrichs for her tireless efforts on the Academic Master Plan. She has been instrumental in its design and write up, overcoming many political challenges. Without her I seriously doubt we would have gotten this far in the process.

Finally, the AMP, though designed to have greatest impacts at the higher programmatic level, will have impacts throughout the university system. This is why I request all of you to read the plan and carefully consider its consequences at all levels. This is a good framework from which to build, but we need to have a strong faculty voice in this plan. Though much of this plan is implemented at the administrative level, the plan will have elements that are implemented by faculty and have direct impacts on what programs we can move forward, what degrees can be conferred and what large scale research we choose to follow. I encourage all of you to be well prepared for discussion in the April meeting, and I will pass all written comments to the FA and SAC. In addition I would request that the Senate prepare motions regarding the AMP for the May meeting so that we can be on record with our input towards this plan. This is an important opportunity to the university community to define itself to our administration and our Board of Regents. We should make good use of it.

Jon Dehn, UAF Faculty Senate President
jdehn@gi.alaska.edu
474-6499

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Faculty Alliance

Dr. Jonathan Dehn
Chair, UA Faculty Alliance
President, UAF Faculty Senate
Associate Research Professor
Geophysical Institute
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775
phone: 907-474-6499
email: jdehn@gi.alaska.edu

Testimony to the Board of Regents, February 18, 2010

On behalf of the Faculty Alliance and the students, faculty and staff of the University of Alaska I would like to thank you for this opportunity to address the Board.

I'd like to start by thanking the Board also for the resolve they have shown to the State in supporting the budget priority of the life sciences building in Fairbanks. The Alliance is prepared to share the motion it passed unanimously with the legislature, representing the Faculty of the three MAUs in support of this effort.

I would also like to respectfully ask the Board to consider allowing governance groups to have their own spot on the agenda for future meetings rather than have these with the public testimony. To best meet the challenges ahead for the University of Alaska, the Governance groups stand ready to assist the Board and the University President. The governance groups also deal intimately with university policy and relations and are truly part of the university's business. We would also like to see public testimony reserved for the public and university constituencies who have their own engaging issues for the Board. Finally, I am happy to announce that after long last, progress has been made with the Academic Master Plan. I am sure that Vice-President Julius will have more to say, and though the draft of the plan at this point has only been circulated among Alliance members, the first impression is generally favorable.

I would like to go on record saying that "The faculty would like an academic master plan, but one in which we had an active role in creating." The faculty are on the front line of implementing any academic plan in the context of the University's missions of teaching, research and service. We are profoundly disappointed that this academic master plan, arguably one of the most important issues that faced UA this year, was drafted virtually without faculty involvement and not in keeping with the process in the Board of Regents approved charge. The Senates, elected faculty to share in governance from the entire UA community, were originally to have seen the draft plan during its creation, have not yet even seen the document, and are concerned that the current timeline does not allow for them to consider the plan and its impacts to their campuses. The Senates would also provide the important role to gather feedback from the students and staff at each campus, though with the Spring Semester well underway, there is likely insufficient time to complete this effort before June.

Only a plan that is supported by the University community will be meaningful. I cannot think of a document that would have broader impacts to the university than an Academic Master Plan. For thousands of students this plan will be the one guiding the University through their entire tenure. It certainly will also be the cornerstone upon which future plans will be built.

Our students, faculty and staff are the University's greatest resource. Sadly in this case this resource was underutilized. We cannot let this become a trend. Therefore I would like to respectfully ask the Board's help in encouraging the Statewide Academic Council and the Administration to make better avail of the University of Alaska community in the future and to ensure that the students, faculty and staff have a strong voice in matters that concern all of us following the tenants laid down in the Board of Regent's policy.

Thank you.

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Faculty Alliance

Dr. Jonathan Dehn
Chair, UA Faculty Alliance
President, UAF Faculty Senate
Associate Research Professor
Geophysical Institute
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775
phone: 907-474-6499
fax: 907-474-7290
email: jdehn@gi.alaska.edu

MOTION RELATING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN: passed
unanimously

"The Faculty Alliance requests that the draft Academic Master Plan (version 21) be distributed to the Faculty Senates of all three MAUs by March 1, 2010 and that a revised timeline and clear procedure for finalizing the plan, with input from Faculty Senates of all three MAUs, be developed by SAC and distributed to the Faculty Senates, the President's Cabinet, and the Board of Regents no later than April 1, 2010. This action is effective February 23, 2010."

RATIONALE:

An extraordinary amount of time and energy has been put into the development of the Academic Master Plan (AMP) to date; however, it is still in draft form and has not been distributed by SAC to the Faculty Alliance and the UAA, UAF and UAS Faculty Senates. The time-line for development of the plan in the original charge included meaningful participation in development of the plan by the three Faculty Senates. This time-line has not been honored.

Two motions were passed by Faculty Alliance to the Systemwide Academic Council: one requesting a new time-line for distribution of the AMP (November 20, 2009); and the other requesting an emergency meeting with the President's Cabinet regarding the AMP (December 11, 2009). Neither motion received any response from SAC, which strongly suggests that faculty involvement in the creation of the Academic Master Plan is not a priority of the Systemwide Academic Council.

The Faculty Senates, while not privy to the content of the AMP, are concerned about the process. They are aware that the time-line in the Charge has not been followed. The UAA Faculty Senate passed a resolution on February 5, 2010, supporting the Alliance motions outlined above. A similar motion is scheduled for the UAF Senate floor on March 5.

If the Academic Master Plan is to truly be an Academic Master Plan, and if the AMP is to get buy-in from faculty, substantial involvement of the faculty senates is essential. Allowing the Senates to evaluate and contribute to the plan may actually speed up development of the final product. The Board of Regents requested that a draft of the AMP be presented to them by the June Board meeting, and that the plan include the participation of the Faculty Senates.

We must begin that process without further delay.

Jon Dehn, Chair, Faculty Alliance; President, UAF Faculty Senate
Genie Phillips, Member, Faculty Alliance; President, UAA Faculty Senate
Sherry Tamone, Member, Faculty Alliance; President, UAS Faculty Senate

Distribution: Mark R. Hamilton, President, Chancellors Pugh, Rogers and Ulmer,
Vice Presidents Julius and Redman, Provosts Henrichs, Driscoll, Interim Provost Stell and
Incoming Provost Caulfield