

## UAF Faculty Senate President's Statement Regarding the UA Presidential Search

I would like to start by thanking all of the faculty, students and staff of all the campuses for their participation in the onsite visits of the 3 finalists for UA President. I apologize that even though it was the first item in new business in our last Senate meeting, the schedule ran so late most of you missed the commentary on this important issue. This is why this statement is being sent to all of you.

The search for the new university President is arguably one of the most important decisions to face a university system. As defined in the State of Alaska's constitution, the choice of a new university President is a primary role of the Board of Regents. Our Regents take this very seriously, and have worked very hard and certainly have had to make some difficult choices. In order to guide them in their search, they appointed a "Presidential Search Advisory Committee" (<http://www.alaska.edu/bor/pres-search/ac/>) to assist them in the process of selecting a new president. The advisory committee would not see any of the applicants for the position until the finalists were chosen, and was primarily involved in pointing out the desirable qualities in a UA President and helping to design the position announcement. This committee was also invited to supply feedback after the on-site visits of the finalists. The committee only had a single faculty member (myself), a single student member (Peter Finn, Chair of the Coalition of Student Leaders at UA) and a single staff member (Maria Russell, Chair of the Staff Alliance). Like the majority of the university community, I was disappointed in our limited representation on this committee. Several appeals were made to the Board of Regents from various governance groups to increase the involvement of the university community. Personally I sent an appeal on behalf of the Faculty Alliance and joined in an appeal from the System Governance Council. All of these appeals were appreciated and considered by the Board, but politely denied.

As we came closer to the announcement of the finalists, the UAF governance office created a web site for submission of questions to be asked of the final three candidates. This site became popular and we quickly moved to include students and staff members, not only at UAF, but at UAA, UAS and all of the community campuses as well. There were well over 100 questions submitted, and though many were repeats, they covered a broad set of issues and demonstrated many common themes. After all, though we clearly have differences, in this we are one university system. The students, faculty and staff at each of the sites were coordinated, asked many overlapping questions at the 3 sites and certainly gave the impression to the candidates that we stood together on the key issues confronting the University of Alaska. This I think was the primary role of these visits, to impress upon the new President of the University of Alaska, whichever of the candidates is chosen, that we have a strong united voice. Each of the candidates was given an unedited list of the questions, with no names or identifying characteristics other than if it was a student, faculty or staff question. The Board has also posted a questionnaire that the entire university community is encouraged to fill out (<http://www.alaska.edu/files/bor/PresSearchFeedbackForm.doc>). At this moment I would like to apologize for the Board of Regents. On this form it was not clear that the personal information

requested was only to ensure even weighting of the feedback. An individual is encouraged to submit more than one form if they later thought of something more to say. Literally hundreds of these forms have been turned in and collated. The information shared with the Search Advisory Committee and Board of Regents contained only the designation if the feedback was from a student, faculty, staff, trustee, alumnus, community member or other. We were informed that all of the feedback documents will be destroyed at the conclusion of the search and told to delete all electronic copies of the collated feedback as well. This policy should have been stated on the form. All of you are encouraged to still fill out these forms with your opinions and observations about the Presidential Finalists.

On Thursday March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the Board of Regents met with the Presidential Search Advisory Committee to solicit feedback on the finalists. The majority of this meeting was in executive session because in a frank discussion of the candidates' strengths and weaknesses much personal information may be revealed, and because the direct knowledge of this discussion may have adverse effects on the university at a variety of levels. In clearer terms, the Board honestly wanted our frank opinions and wished to protect that. As a result I cannot say much about the meeting. What I can say is that I did my best to represent the 1500 or so faculty in the UA system. I was concerned that there would not be much in the way of consensus in the faculty about the candidates and was pleasantly surprised and relieved that this was not the case. Further, the students and staff aligned almost perfectly with the faculty. Peter Finn, Maria Russell and I gave a strong united front to the Board of Regents, which left them very positively impressed. It is my hope that this was a first step to reconnecting with our Board, and through them our new President, to help them guide the University of Alaska through the coming potentially difficult years. The Board also announced they will meet again on March 15<sup>th</sup> to make their final decision regarding the candidates. Pending successful negotiations, an announcement of who is our next President should follow shortly after that date.

If you have any questions regarding the search process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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