

# **Executive Summary**

## **Results of UAF's Self-Study and Site Visit, Fall 2001**

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On January 11, 2002, UAF received reaffirmation of accreditation on the basis of the fall 2001 comprehensive self-study and full-scale evaluation. The Evaluation Committee provided in its full-scale evaluation report two distinct types of recommendations and commendations – those per standard/unit/subject, which may be found in the Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report dated October 7-10, 2001 and those for the institution as a whole. The institutional recommendations and commendations are listed below; the others are available by requesting a copy of the full report from the Provost's Office.

### **Eight Institutional Recommendations in Brief**

1. Construct additional instructional, office and research facilities and acquire state-of-the-art equipment at the Fairbanks and branch campuses, and at specialized research locations.
2. Address faculty compensation to bring salaries to adequate levels to attract and retain faculty.
3. Develop faculty and staff handbooks.
4. Provide secure and fireproof storage of student records at all campuses.
5. Better integration of teaching, research and service activities between Fairbanks campus and College of Rural Alaska campuses.
6. Board of Regents and UAF evaluate policies and procedures of direct appointments of senior officials.
7. Ensure that all certificate and associate degrees contain related instruction components and that they be published in relevant print and electronic catalogs in clear and complete terms.
8. Ensure that outcomes assessment of student learning is conducted in all certificate and degree programs, including new programs.

### **Five Institutional Commendations in Brief**

1. Deferred Maintenance
2. Assessment in Core, Math, New Programs
3. Sharing
4. Planning
5. Research/Academic Program Compatibility

**Fall 2003 – progress report due to Commission regarding reaffirmation of accreditation, particularly addressing the following areas:**

- Progress on development of faculty and staff handbooks – recommendation #3
- Progress on secure and fireproof storage of student records – recommendation #4
- Progress regarding related instruction – recommendation #7
- Progress on outcomes assessment of student learning – recommendation #8
- Progress on these new degree programs and certificates: Master of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, Master of Arts in Rural Development, Accounting Technician Certificate, Certificate and AAS degree concentrations in Emergency

Medical Services, accelerated BS/MA degree program in Computer Science, Interdisciplinary MS in Statistics, Certificate and AAS degree in Dental Assistant program, Master of Arts in Administration of Justice, Master of Arts in Cross Cultural Studies, Certificate and AAS in Tribal Management, AAS in Process Technology

The following is the text as it appears in the Full-Scale Evaluation Committee Report and the 1-11-02 letter of reaffirmation of accreditation.

### **Institutional Recommendations**

1. The first concern is that UAF has insufficient laboratory and office space to support its expanding research and graduate education base. The UA president and UAF chancellor's initiatives, supported by the governor, and funded by the legislature, provided new faculty in many of the science and engineering fields. Moreover, federal support for many of these programs led to an extraordinary increase in research activity and the potential for a significant expansion of graduate students in these programs; however, the university faces a serious space limitation problem. It does not have the laboratory space or research equipment to continue the expansion of its research or probably even maintain the current pace. Thus, it is vital that the state provide increased support for laboratory expansion. Without that support, the state's recent investment in the new academic and R & D initiatives, will not reach its full potential and thus the outcomes desired for Alaskan economic development. For example, without the support for UAF's proposed new fisheries facilities, the state's investment in this outstanding program could be stifled. Further, expansion of research facilities and the provision of state-of-the-art equipment on the Fairbanks campus will be necessary to support the continued research expansion of UAF's institutes and colleges.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that the University of Alaska Fairbanks seek funding and undertake such steps as are necessary to ensure the construction of additional instructional, office and research facilities and acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment at the Fairbanks campus and at the College of Rural Alaska campuses, and at specialized research locations.

2. A second concern facing UAF is the growing problem of salary compression and in some cases inversion. UAF salaries are significantly below market levels in many disciplines. This has affected the ability to hire and retain qualified faculty, and has threatened the quality of some academic programs. Where market-based salaries for new hires have been possible, they have created problems of salary scale compression and inversion, whereby faculty who served UAF for many years are compensated less than those recently hired. This has led to retention problems among senior faculty who are critical to UAF's mission of building global distinction in its research and teaching.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that UAF immediately address faculty compensation issues to bring salaries to levels adequate to attract and retain an excellent faculty.

3. A third concern is the absence of faculty and staff handbooks. The integrity and equity of the faculty evaluative processes are crucial to the institution's ability to fulfill its mission. From the Senate Blue Book and the Provost's website, it is not clear that the university's evaluation plans include administrative access to all primary data (e.g., copies of publications, student and peer evaluations of teaching) for any review other than tenure review (Standard 4.1.b). Nor is it clear that multiple indices are used in the evaluation to teaching (Standard 4.1.c). Because there is no single faculty handbook where all the policies and procedures are spelled out, and because bargaining agreements, university, college, and peer unit relevant policies and procedures all apply, consistent understanding, interpretation and application of policy is difficult. Similar confusion exists regarding staff hiring, classification, and evaluation.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that the UAF develop faculty and staff handbooks that collect the policies and procedures governing appointment, evaluation, scholarship, research and artistic creation, for all faculty and staff, full or part-time, on all campuses of UAF, and that evaluative provisions conform to Standard 4.1 on faculty evaluation. We recommend UAF provide a report to the Commission in two years.

4. A fourth concern is that of student records. Student records, including transcripts, may be accurate and comprehensive, but they are not entirely secure on the Fairbanks campus or the College of Rural Alaska campuses. Storage of student records including transcripts must be secure and fireproof.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that necessary steps be taken promptly to provide secure and fireproof storage of all student records. If records need to be converted from hard copy to another format for storage, that conversion should be accomplished quickly. We recommend UAF provide a report to the Commission in two years.

5. A fifth concern is associated with the future direction of UAF as it relates to its diverse role of serving as a world leader in Arctic research and other research areas as well as being an effective education provider for rural Alaska. Integrating the College of Rural Alaska into the dynamic undergraduate and graduate research developments at UAF is crucial for the future of the institution and its role in rural economic development. With the growth in state support for higher education, it is important for UAF to carefully plan for these joint activities and effectively integrate them.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that the UAF systematically plan for the integration of its activities, including teaching, research and public service consistent with its graduate, research and undergraduate programs with the role of the College of Rural Alaska in rural Alaskan development.

6. The sixth concern is that of direct appointments of leadership (Standard 6.A.3).

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that the University of Alaska Board of Regents and the UAF campus review governance provisions for

consideration of faculty, student and staff review and judgments in those matters in which these constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest such as the appointment of senior officials (Standard 6.A.3).

7. The seventh concern is the inconsistency of required related instruction components of applied certificate and associate degree programs of 30 semester credits or more in length.

UAF has no stated certificate requirements in the catalog for related instruction nor any statement of a standard for the inclusion of related instruction in certificate programs to guide the design of curricula. Consequently, it has not been widely recognized that there is such a requirement. Requirements for related instruction in certificates and the associate of applied science (AAS) degree have been discussed by faculty and administration at the system level but have never been established in system-wide Regents Policy or University regulations. UAF's present requirements for related instruction as stated in the catalog for the AAS were established by the community colleges prior to restructuring. AAS students can avoid either computation or human relations, thus violating related instruction requirements for associate degrees.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that the University ensure that all certificate and associate degrees contain recognizable bodies of instruction in program-related areas of communication, computation, and human relations, and that related instruction components be published in the relevant print and electronic catalogs in clear and complete terms (Standard 2.C **Undergraduate Program**, 2.C.1; Policy 2.1 *General Education/Related Instruction Requirements*).

8. The eighth concern is lack of comprehensive and consistent assessment of student learning. All programs reviewed showed some evidence of assessment, and efforts are underway to fully comply with these standards. There is clear understanding of what is necessary and the steps required to be in full compliance with the standard. Currently, assessment is spotty and inconsistent even though there is evidence that assessment has caused changes in the curriculum. As the University expands its certificate and degree programs, there is a concern that assessment of student learning in the various certificate and degree programs across the institution may become uneven.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **recommends** that the University ensure that an assessment of student learning is conducted in all certificate and degree programs offered by the institution, including new program offerings. The assessment model developed for the core curriculum/general education program may serve as a guide for other academic programs (Standard 2.B **Educational Program Planning and Assessment**, Standard Indicators 2.B.1; 2.B.2; 2.B.3; Policy 2.2 *Educational Assessment*).

## **Institutional Commendations**

The Evaluation Committee presents five commendations of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

### **1. Deferred Maintenance**

The Evaluation Committee **commends** the University of Alaska Fairbanks for its remarkable, diligent, and consistent efforts to reduce its backlog of deferred maintenance and to renovate and modernize its academic facilities.

### **2. Assessment in Core, Math, New Programs**

Assessment in the Core Curriculum is well advanced. Each course in the core has specified desired learning outcomes, and two iterations of assessment have been used to improve instruction and have been reported to the Board of Regents.

Mathematics, for example, has improved placement processes in the core courses, refined course content, and achieved greater consistency of content and instruction across sections.

Therefore, the Evaluation Committee **commends** UAF on its progress in using assessment of courses in the baccalaureate core to improve teaching and learning.

### **3. Sharing**

The Evaluation Committee **commends** the University on the use of joint faculty appointments, the numerous examples of interdisciplinary teaching and research, and the sharing of equipment, laboratories, and facilities.

### **4. Planning**

The Evaluation Committee **commends** the University of Alaska Fairbanks for initiating its extensive planning process and implementing specific accountability measures and for using that information to make more informed decisions about university financial allocations, space planning and other activities.

### **5. Research/Academic Program Compatibility**

The Evaluation Committee **commends** the University of Alaska Fairbanks for developing synergistic relationships between its very visible and successful research institutes and their associated academic programs. Faculty members, many with joint appointments, are clearly committed to both their research and to their teaching duties. Such dual responsibilities are often in conflict, but at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the benefits to research productivity as well as to both graduate and undergraduate education are evident.