Drumbeats 6—Haaghezetolno'
We Will Live Well

An Evaluation of the Higher Education Project
Sponsored by the U. S. Department of Agriculture at the
University of Alaska Fairbanks

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Prior grants received from the USDA Alaska Native Serving and Hawaiian Serving Institutions Educational Grants Program by the College of Rural and Community Development (CRCD) of the University of Alaska Fairbanks allowed the college's five ANSI campuses—acting as a Consortium—to engage in regional needs assessment and to develop place-based career certificates in response to identified needs. Each campus in the Consortium developed a certificate in a specific area of concentration in a USDA discipline.

This specialization resulted in the development of courses, certificates and degrees in the following areas: Veterinary Science (VTS), Ethno-botany (EBOT), Environmental Studies (ENVI) and High Latitude Range Management (HLRM). The VTS and HLRM certificates and the Associate of Science degree were approved in 2007 by the UA Board of Regents. Environmental Studies and Ethnobotany were approved at the September 2009 Board meeting. Certificates have been designed to articulate into an Associate of Science degree.

Drumbeats 6 has been directed at continuing these certificate and associate degree programs and at strengthening the Consortium by providing staff, inviting other ANSI institutions to join and formalizing planning and resource sharing among Consortium members. Because development work on the selected certificates has been largely accomplished, the Consortium also sought input from communities as to new areas in which the university can be of assistance in addressing the needs of rural Alaska. To frame this discussion, the Consortium adopted a focus on subsistence sciences—those USDA target sciences that assist individuals and communities to better understand and improve food, shelter, fuel, transportation and other material aspects of rural/village life.[1]

The program had three goals. The first is directed at building the capacity of the Consortium to respond to emerging regional educational needs. The other two goals speak to the continuation of prior *Drumbeats* educational efforts.

Goal 1: To increase ANSI capacity to assess and respond to community-identified training, educational and research needs as they relate to the subsistence sciences.

Goal 2: To create career pathways into the subsistence sciences for Alaska Natives through the development and delivery of post-secondary certificates and the Associate of Science degree.

[1] The term "subsistence sciences" is based on the legal definition of "subsistence usage" in Title VII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Goal 3: To increase the number of Alaska Natives enrolled in courses leading to a certificate or degree in the subsistence sciences.

Although all three goals were addressed throughout the project year, a main emphasis has been on Consortium-building, recognizing that long-term sustainability of the programs initiated under the grant requires a collaborative effort among the developing campuses. To have maximum effect, this effort ideally would include all of the Alaskan campuses—both within the UA system and without—that serve a large Alaskan Native student body. Because of this emphasis, the evaluator has focused on the activities, measures and outcomes identified for Goal 1, although progress on the other two goals will also be covered.

To obtain information for this evaluation, the evaluator participated in Consortium teleconferences, reviewed materials and student data, attended the annual AN/NH USDA meeting in Hawaii and interviewed key Consortium members. The report follows the Outcomes and Measures found in the grant application, a copy of which is attached to this evaluation. Each goal and its related objectives are discussed, with information and data presented to indicate the extent to which the objectives have been achieved. The evaluator also used the attached *Haaghezetolno'* Logic Model to look at program impacts, which are discussed in the *Summary* section below. The report concludes with recommendations for further action.

Goal 1: Increase ANSI Capacity

Objective 1: Increase the effectiveness of the ANSI Consortium by providing staff support, opportunities for joint planning, and inclusion of non-CRCD ANSI campuses.

Although the CRCD ANSI campuses had been operating as a Consortium for several years, lack of staff, distances between campuses and time pressures on the campus directors had limited the effectiveness of the collaborative effort.

Hiring a program manager for the USDA grant was seen by members as a first step in increasing efficiency. In June, 2008, Elisa Bruns came on board to provide project support. Ms. Bruns brought to the Consortium over six years of experience with Alaska Native organizations, having served as manager for various projects at Southcentral Foundation and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. In her role as USDA program manager, she has provided various services to the Consortium as a whole and to the individual campuses.

A primary task has been to increase communications both among the CRCD campuses and with the other ANSI campuses in Alaska. Teleconferenced meetings have been held monthly with CRCD USDA campus directors, faculty and Cooperative Extension Services. The grant proposal established a measure of 80 percent participation by campus directors at each meeting. The actual participation rate was 68 percent average for the 12 meetings. The June meeting was held just prior to the annual AN/NH USDA meeting in Hawaii, when several of the directors were already traveling to that event. If the June meeting is left out of the calculation, the average attendance by directors was 73 percent. However, all campuses were represented either by the director or faculty or both at all meetings (again, with the exception of the June meeting) with an average attendance of 11 participants. Those interviewed for this evaluation all

indicated that the meetings were helpful and served several useful purposes. At each meeting, the program manager reviewed progress toward grant objectives and indicated where additional effort was necessary to keep on target. Most meetings also included a budget report. Finally, the meetings provided a forum where participants could discuss issues of common concern such as the forthcoming USDA grant cycle, community engagement, USDA reporting, partnership possibilities and marketing.

The Consortium determined that long-term sustainability of the USDA programs requires effective linkages with partners outside of the UA system, particularly with organizations that share a concern for rural sustainability, education and economic development. The Consortium drafted a letter to the First Alaskans Institute, inviting that organization to meet to discuss possible collaborative efforts. That letter was sent by Bernice Joseph, Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education for UAF in late August. At the time of this evaluation report, a reply had not yet been received.

To facilitate communication with other non-CRCD ANSI campuses, the program manager set up quarterly teleconferences to which all ANSI campuses were invited. A total of five meetings were held during the grant period. The grant proposal called for participation of at least two non-CRCD campus directors in these meetings. Of the five meetings, two had participation from seven of the eight UA ANSI campuses (88 percent) and three had participation from six of the eight (75 percent). The final, non-UA ANSI campus (Ilisagvik Community College in Barrow) was invited to all of the teleconferences but did not attend. In discussing participation with the USDA program manager and with several of the non-CRCD directors and campus faculty, the evaluator found that the invitation did not always reach the director level and that scheduling in at least one case conflicted with other activities, such as the UAS Fall Convocation.

The quarterly meetings involved the ANSI campuses in a discussion about federal funding opportunities with the UA Washington, D.C. liaison. Those who participated in the quarterly meetings found the information obtained helpful. However, several participants expressed a desire to have discussion among the campuses about current and proposed programs, joint funding opportunities, best practices and other areas of common activity and concern. This discussion could follow and be sparked by the information from the federal level.

Increased cooperation among the ANSI campuses will be explored more fully in the coming grant year with the goal of eventual creation of a system-wide Consortium that would include all of the campuses and that could lead to joint grant proposals and other forms of joint planning and program execution.

The grant application had as a measure that each Consortium member would sign off on the annual plan of operations. The campus director's sign off on the grant proposal was considered as meeting this measure. In addition, the USDA program manager met individually with each CRCD campus to go over and discuss the annual both for the campus and for the Consortium as a whole. At that time, minor amendments were made to the campus plan, as necessary.

A final measure under this objective in the grant document was for the development of written procedures/MOAs among ANSI campuses covering student/faculty sharing, course delivery and program development. This measure was in response to an earlier evaluation finding that some CRCD directors felt that these issues needed to be addressed region-wide. However, at the October 2, 2008 USDA Directors meeting, the group concluded that sufficient procedures were in place and that nothing additional needed to be developed.

The group did identify other areas in which a more coordinated effort would be helpful—in particular, marketing, data collection, reporting and interface with the federal USDA program and with the Hawaii Consortium.

The Consortium approved a common marketing plan and retained a consultant to develop a consistent "brand" for USDA-developed certificates and degrees and to design promotional materials for each program area. The program manager utilized these materials in the development of a website that also serves as a common store for information from and about the USDA grant. The promotional materials have been distributed to villages in each region and served as the basis for two rounds of newspaper advertising (Fall, 2008 and Fall, 2009).

The Consortium will also market the USDA certificates at the Elders and Youth Conference in conjunction with the annual Alaska Federation of Natives convention in October, 2009. The Consortium has rented exhibit space and purchased promotional items such as water bottles and pens for distribution. The Conference is the most widely attended event for Alaska Native youth in the state and Consortium participation should substantially increase awareness of the USDA programs.

The program manager developed a worksheet to collect information on student participation, persistence and success that is used by all four programs. This standardized worksheet has made reporting easier for the campuses and has allowed more consistent data for the CRIS and other reports. There has been some interest in further developing the form to allow registrars to simply input information to a common site. The program manager is exploring this option.

The program manager has also been involved in collecting information and preparing drafts of all required reports—including the grant narrative and budget—and for interfacing with the USDA office in D.C. She serves as the point of contact between the Alaska and Hawaii Consortiums. This year, she also coordinated the presentations of all the Alaska USDA grantees at the annual meeting and information for the Joint Impact Report on all AN/NH USDA projects. This coordinating activity has allowed the Alaska USDA grant recipients to present a more organized and cohesive image.

The grant document identified three outcomes for this objective:

- Functioning Consortium with active participation from all ANSI campuses
- Coordinated program planning in subsistence sciences disciplines
- Standardized procedures for sharing students/faculty/ courses across CRCD region and with non-CRCD ANSI campuses.

Based on the information available from attendance at monthly and quarterly meetings, interviews with USDA directors and regular communication with the program manager, the evaluator finds that these outcomes have been met. All of the CRCD USDA campus directors indicated that the Consortium is functioning very effectively and is providing a high degree of coordination and collaboration. This was a considerable change from the 2007 evaluation, when directors expressed concern over the effectiveness and usefulness of the Consortium. All directors attributed the increased effectiveness largely to the work of the program manager and all indicated that they foresaw even greater benefits this coming year, now that the manager has had the experience of one complete grant cycle.

The evaluator notes the smooth development of the grant proposal for 2009/10 as evidence that the Consortium is able to engage in cooperative and coordinated planning; in particular, as one interviewee noted, the group's willingness to allocate resources to areas of need such as the meat packing facility at Northwest Campus and the Alternative Energy position at Bristol Bay. This allocation is quite different from earlier grant cycles when the total was simply divided up equally among the campuses. The Consortium support for cross-regional science faculty meetings, discussed below, is another indication of coordinated planning in the subsistence sciences.

Finally, the evaluator concludes based on the discussion of Consortium members that sufficient procedures exist for sharing students, faculty and courses across both the CRCD region and UA as a whole. From earlier conversations and knowledge from evaluations of other programs, however, the evaluator finds that there exist institutional barriers to fully utilizing these procedures, primarily in the metrics used by the system both for budgeting and for reporting to external audiences. These barriers are beyond the control of the individual campuses but could perhaps begin to be addressed through cooperative action by a body such as a system-wide ANSI Consortium.

Objective 2: Strengthen CRCD subsistence science courses/degrees through cross-regional science faculty joint academic program development, delivery and review.

The grant supported two cross-regional science faculty meetings which included both USDA-certificate science faculty and basic (biology and chemistry) faculty from all five campuses.

The grant proposal indicated several measures for this objective. The first was for standard course syllabi for general science courses across the region. However, faculty chose instead to focus on ways in which the labs for distance-delivered science courses could be more standardized and improved. This topic was selected because of its great importance not only to the certificates but also to the Associate of Science degree. The faculty identified several ways in which labs can be strengthened and funding has been included in the 2009/2010 USDA grant to continue to support this activity.

A second measure was for science courses to be cross-listed in the CRCD schedule. This measure was achieved in both the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 course schedule, as well as on UA OnLine, so that students from throughout the region had information about and access to

distance-delivered science courses. A final measure was for faculty review and comment on new courses and degrees. This has been accomplished through the CRCD science faculty meetings and the science representative on the CRCD curriculum review committee.

The grant document listed as outcomes for this objective the following:

- Coordinated and standardized general and subsistence science curricula across CRCD region
- Cross-listing of courses
- Region-wide review of proposals for new courses/ degrees, including UAF science faculty

The evaluator finds that the first outcome was partially addressed through the discussion and planning for improved science labs for distance science courses. The other two outcomes have been met, as described above.

Objective 3: Enhance the ability of Consortium members to seek out and respond to community needs as they relate to subsistence sciences.

The Consortium chose to address this objective primarily through a community dialog process, building on the expertise of the Cooperative Extension Service. Six dialogs—one in each campus region and one for CRCD as a whole—were planned for the grant period. Four dialogs were completed, in Dillingham, Kotzebue, Bethel and Tok. The Northwest Campus at Nome indicated that it was already engaged in an on-going dialog and so did not schedule an additional community outreach activity. The CRCD region-wide dialog was replaced by the Consortium Advisory Committee meeting in Kotzebue, due to time constraints.

A total of 65 people participated in the dialogs which were facilitated by Bill Hall from Cooperative Extension Service. Fifty-five of the participants were community members representing a variety of local interests: tribal councils and organizations, Native associations, health and housing corporations, local school districts, state and federal agencies and local government. The remaining participants were from the USDA campuses. In two cases, the dialogs were held with the campus advisory council which has representatives from most of the campus constituencies.

Directors of the four campuses participating in the dialogs reported that they found them useful, although there was some concern expressed that not all of the community participants were actively engaged. One director indicated that the dialog gave her and her advisory council members a new vocabulary in which to frame discussions of the UA role in the community: learning rather than education; discovery rather than research and engagement rather than service. Other directors indicated that the dialog facilitated discussions that would not have taken place in a regular advisory council setting.

Thirty-four (52.3 percent) of the participants filled out the written evaluation forms, with the following results:

Statement	YES	NO	MAYBE	Percent YES
The dialogue was a learning experience.	26	2	6	76%
The dialogue helped me to explore ideas.	30	2	2	88%
I learned from the other participants.	32		2	94%
I gained a new perspective—a new way of understanding—the topics we discussed.	23	2	6	68%
The facilitator gave everyone time to talk.	33	1		97%
The facilitator explained the process clearly.	29	1	4	85%
The facilitator managed the discussion effectively.	31		1	91%

As can be seen, participants (at least those providing evaluation data) found the dialogs helpful in exploring ideas and learning from each other. The facilitator also received high marks for conducting the dialogs.

The grant proposal calls for a comparison of the dialog results with the outcomes of the community educational assessments funded under the 2003/04 USDA grant. The evaluator did review results of both activities. However, each dialog evolved somewhat differently, so that no common set of outcomes emerged. And in no case did the dialog focus exclusively on community needs, so that comparisons between the two years become difficult. However, it is clear that for both years, a community concern is that the programs of the campuses be shaped by local culture, economic conditions and values.

Since three of the four dialogs took place near the end of the grant period, it is too early to gauge what impact they will have on the planning of individual campuses or the Consortium as a whole. However, partly as a result of the Dillingham dialog—which identified community and civic engagement, caring for the land and sustaining resources and communities as important issues—middle and high school students participated in a Dillingham School District/ Bristol Bay Campus dual-credit course on "Thinking Straight". In the course, students used a problem- and strength-based model to develop community action plans for social, economic, political, cultural and/or environmental improvements for themselves and their community. Students participating in the course subsequently presented at the Alaska Forum on the Environment and the 2nd Annual Western Alaska Interdisciplinary Science Conference and attended Alaska Youth Environmental and Leadership Training. Several community events centered on environmental issues, including the proposed Pebble Mine in the region, also followed from the dialog.

The grant document list two outcomes for this objective:

- Documented rural resident needs and interests in the subsistence sciences
- Suggestions/requests for training and/or university coursework in specific subsistence sciences

The evaluator finds that the first outcome was achieved, as evidenced by the number of community members and organizations that participated in the dialogs. The Bristol Bay campus activities following the dialog, described above, indicate that the dialog did provide suggestions for further activities, particularly with respect to environmental issues. The other dialogs were conducted too recently for there to be a university response.

Objective 4: Increase local campus effectiveness in assisting residents in rural communities to determine their values, attitudes and behaviors revolving around sustainability and to identify emerging local/community needs.

At the time of the grant application, it was anticipated that the Bristol Bay Campus would have the part-time services of a staff member who could follow up the regional dialog with a more in-depth process in one community. In the final budget revision, this part-time position was assigned to CES to conduct the larger dialogs. However, Bristol Bay Campus did hire a position to work on alternative energy for the region. This position is working with business and communities on energy issues. BBC has also hired an individual to conduct a preliminary sustainability survey in Fall, 2009. The results of this effort will be shared with other CRCD campuses.

Objective 5: Increase the utilization of Native Ways of Knowing into university programs through local and Haaghezetolno' Advisory Councils.

Each program has a local advisory council that provides direction for program and course development, including the use of Native Ways of Knowing. The Ethnobotany Advisory Council is a good example of effective faculty/elder collaboration. As well as overseeing the development of ethnobotany course work, the Council has contributed to and reviewed the information contained in the *Yup'ik Manual of Ethnobotany*, which will be published and distributed in the coming grant year. Councils for the other USDA certificates have provided advice and assistance throughout program development. This advice is reflected in council minutes and in course syllabi.

A member of each of the local advisory councils was invited to a face-to-face meeting with all of the Consortium members in April, 2009. The meeting was held at the Chukchi campus in Kotzebue and included the USDA campus directors and faculty. The two-day meeting featured presentations on each of the certificate programs as well as visits to Chukchi Campus partners. Participants were also invited to participate in cultural activities, such as ice fishing.

All of the interviewees indicated that the meeting provided a good opportunity for sharing and for disseminating information about the USDA programs. One director indicated that it was particularly helpful for faculty to present their programs to a wider audience. Participants also appreciated the opportunity for more informal interaction, not only with the advisory council members but internally, within the Consortium.

However, some expressed a desire for a more formal delineation of the intended role of a region-wide advisory council. At present, membership in the council is largely ad-hoc and no

participant at the Kotzebue meeting had attended the 2007 Advisory Council meeting in Dillingham. Therefore, much of the second meeting was devoted to bringing participants up to speed on USDA purpose and activity. The Consortium may wish to revisit the concept of a region-wide council and, if the decision is to continue such, to more clearly articulate roles.

The outcome indentified for this objective in the grant document is that subsistence science course curricula and degrees reflect local knowledge. The evaluator finds this to be the case, largely through the work of local advisory councils.

Goal 2: Create Career Pathways

Objective 1: Increase educational opportunities in Ethnobotany through the certificate level.

At the end of the last grant cycle two certificates—Veterinary Science and High Latitude Range Management—had completed academic review and had been approved by the UA Board of Regents. The Environmental Studies certificate was in the review process. Because of difficulties in hiring an ethnobotany faculty, the development of this certificate had been considerably delayed. However, the goal was to have this certificate complete the review process and to be ready for Board approval by September 2009.

As it transpired over the 2008/09 grant year, the environmental science certificate experienced some delay in moving through the internal UAF curriculum review process. As part of the revisions required by this process, the certificate was renamed "environmental studies", although it retained a heavy science emphasis. Four catalog courses were approved and delivered during the year: Introduction to Environmental Science, Introduction to Water Quality, Internship in Environmental Studies and Field Techniques for Environmental Technicians. Special topics courses in Biofuel, NEPA, electric car conversion and GIS were also delivered.

With respect to the ethnobotany certificate, the grant document called for four new courses. By the close of the academic year, five had been developed and approved as the certificate moved through the curriculum review process: Introduction to Ethnobotany, Research Methods in Ethnobotany, Seminar in Ethnobotany, Ethical Wildcrafting and Ethnobotanical Chemistry. Three of these courses were delivered in the academic year.

Although both of the certificates were ready for Board approval at the June, 2009, meeting, the Board did not act at that time. However, both certificates were approved at the September, 2009, meeting.

Objective 2: Expand CRCD regional capacity to provide instruction in meat sciences by providing specialized laboratory and research space.

A major expenditure for the 2008/09 grant cycle was the purchase of a portable facility to provide space for regulated meat production, training and research at the Northwest Campus. Although primarily for processing reindeer meat, the facility may also be used in the future for other food sources. The decision to support the facility represents a substantial commitment by

the Consortium to allocate funds to areas of regional need rather than simply splitting the total equally among campuses.

The meat processing facility has arrived at the campus and will be set up this fall. The facility will be completely operational by Spring 2010 and will be used for courses, workshops and research into new products. A master meat cutter from Finland has been hired by the campus to work with this facility. He will join the campus in Fall, 2009. In addition to securing the facility, the grant document also calls for the development and delivery of a meat production course. This course—HLRM 160: Meat Production—was provided in Spring 2009 to seven students.

The new facility allows the program to meet USDA standards for meat production and thus opens state and national markets for reindeer products. The HLRM faculty met with peers in the Hawaii USDA program to discuss ways in which the culinary and nutrition programs in Hawaii could partner with the Northwest campus to develop and market new products with the potential of accessing the Japanese market in the future.

The evaluator finds that the objective for the meat sciences facility has been met.

Goal 3: Increase the Number of Alaska Natives in Subsistence Sciences.

The objectives for this goal are tied to the individual certificate programs and will be discussed by program.

Ethnobotany

The objective for ethnobotany has two components: summer camps for high school and college students and an exchange with the Ethnobotany program at Windward Community College in Hawaii.

The objective for the summer camps was to enroll and support 12 high school students in a college-level biology course and to enroll/support 10 college students in an ethnobotany course. USDA funds were used to support eight high school students in a four-week summer science camp on Nunivak Island. Nine college students, including the Hawaiian exchange student, were supported during a two-week intensive Introduction to Ethnobotany course. All of the supported students successfully completed the course with a grade of C or better.

In discussions with the campus director, it was suggested that the lower-than-expected enrollments were at least partially explainable by the fact that the ethnobotany certificate had not yet been approved and that it was difficult to recruit people for a course when it could not yet apply to any degree. However, despite this uncertainty, she indicated that there were three local residents that were ready to enroll in the certificate once it had been approved and three more students who had indicated strong interest, one of whom was outside the region. One student has completed most of the coursework for the certificate already through a combination of local courses and credits earned through a student exchange with Windward.

The second component for the ethnobotany program was to continue the exchange program with Windward. One Hawaiian student participated in the summer science camp. In prior years, the exchange was scheduled for an entire semester. However, this major time commitment limited the number of students who were interested in exchanging. For the coming grant cycle, the exchange will feature two students each from Kuskokwim and Windward campuses who will act as a cohort. Each cohort will work together on their home campus and spend two weeks at the visiting campus. It is anticipated that this shorter time commitment away from home plus the fact that each student has a partner will increase student interest in the exchange.

Environmental Studies

The environmental studies program had two objectives: To support ten college students and to provide dual enrollment opportunities for ten high school students in environmental science courses.

The campus supported a total of 16 college students and seven high school students during the Fall 08/Spring 09 semesters in both environmental and related science courses. Of the 16 college students, three were continuing students who had been supported in prior grant years. Two of the three took courses in both semesters. An additional 23 students were supported during the summer session in two intensives—Introduction to Water Quality and Field Techniques for Environmental Technicians—and in summer internships.

In addition to the seven high school students dual-enrolled in environmental courses, the college provided dual enrollment opportunities in math and chemistry, both of which are pre- or co-requisites for the environmental studies certificate, to 29 high school students.

The environmental studies program met its objective for supporting ten college-level environmental studies students, all of whom successfully completed the coursework. However, the grant proposal also aimed for an 80 percent persistence from Fall 08 to Spring 09. This persistence rate was not achieved, again primarily because the certificate had not yet been approved. As of September, 2009, 17 students had submitted the pre-application for the environmental studies certificate. Of this total, two have been taking courses for several years and will be near completion now that the certificate has been approved. One is a high school senior who has been taking many of the dual enrollment courses in preparation for enrolling in the certificate after graduation.

Veterinary Science

The Veterinary Science certificate is offered jointly by the Interior-Aleutians and Chukchi campuses. The program had the following objectives:

- Continue support for 12 current VTS students
- Recruit four new students each from IA and Chukchi during the program year
- Support two students through the practicum experience
- Provide research experiences for at least two students

The VTS program supported a total of seven students in AY2008/09; five from I/A and two from Chukchi. Of these seven, five were continuing students and two were new. Three additional students continued in the certificate from the prior year but were not supported by USDA funds. Five new students entered the program, two of whom were supported by USDA funds. Eight students (five supported students) took two courses or more in the academic year. Most successfully completed the coursework although several students did take incompletes.

One student completed her certificate in Spring 2009 and another is expected to complete the certificate in Fall 2009. The spring completer is continuing her studies in the Associate of Science program. Five I/A students were enrolled in the AS program in Spring 2009 and two graduated. Although none of the AS students was supported by USDA, the degree itself was developed under USDA funding.

The program recruited five new students over the past year, all from I/A campus. These students have enrolled in Fall 2009 courses. The I/A director indicated that an additional five to seven students were enrolled or planning to enroll in the VTS certificate program for Fall 2009. The VTS courses for Fall are quite full, so additional certificate students may be forthcoming from that campus.

Student recruitment at Chukchi has been less robust. In an interview, the campus director indicated that the promotional materials for the program developed by the Consortium had been sent to all of the villages. An ad published by the Consortium describing the program also was placed in the local paper prior to both Fall 2008 and Fall 2009 semester start dates. It is hoped that these efforts will spur recruitment in the region.

Promotional materials and ads were also placed at all other USDA campuses. To assess the effectiveness of Consortium marketing efforts, the Consortium program manager conducted a survey in all three semesters of the grant period to determine where enrolled students got their information about the program. In Fall, 2008, after materials were developed and distributed, most students indicated that they learned about the program from word of mouth or from other sources such as the college catalog or course schedule. None indicated that they had learned from an ad, program poster or flyer. In the Spring 2008 survey, although word of mouth was still the most important means of getting information about a program, 18 percent of the respondents indicated that they had seen a poster or flyer. For summer intensives, the most common methods were "word of mouth" and "instructor recruitment". These results indicate that a comprehensive recruitment effort should include both widely-distributed print materials and local person-to-person contact. Given the importance of word of mouth, it may be beneficial to have current students assist with efforts such as the AFN Elders and Youth Conference.

Two VTS students were supported in their practicum experience in the 2008/09 grant year. Both successfully completed the course and one of them obtained her certificate in Spring 09. Two students were supported for research. One student—who completed the certificate—is continuing her research involving a comparison between natural and chemical wormers in sled dogs. The second student is working on sled dog nutrition.

High Latitude Range Management

HLRM had two objectives under Goal 3: to continue support for eight HLRM students and to recruit two additional students.

Seven continuing students received support in the past grant year. All successfully completed the meat production course in the spring. Of the seven students, four have finished considerable coursework (six to nine courses) in the certificate and one is expected to complete the program in Spring 2010. Another is very close to completion, having successfully taken most of the HLRM courses and the required biology and computation courses. Several students attempted the Biology 104 course; however, only one successfully completed it while the others took incompletes.

No new students have been recruited into the program this grant year. Four new students had been accepted into the program at the close of the last grant cycle; however, three of these are currently inactive. One has withdrawn his application. The Northwest campus director has indicated that the three inactive students will be followed up this fall, once a project manager, who will be hired under the new grant cycle, is in place. The HLRM manager will also be responsible for working throughout the region to recruit new students.

Based on the above information, the evaluator concludes that Goal 3 has been only partially accomplished. On the plus side, all of the USDA certificates have now been approved by the Board of Regents. All of the certificates have students enrolled in courses. Overall, a non-duplicated count of 97 students took coursework in the grant year; 87 of those received USDA support.

VTS and HLRM, which have been approved since Fall 2007, have students who have either completed the certificate or who are very close to completion. Five students are pursuing the USDA-developed Associate of Science degree and more are expected as students complete the certificate and move on to the associate level. One graduated with the AS degree in Spring 2009. The Kuskokwim student exchange with Hawaii is operational and will be expanded this coming academic year. Other programs, particularly the meat science portion of HLRM, are exploring additional linkages with the Hawaii USDA programs.

However, student recruitment and retention are still significant concerns. Although sufficient numbers of students receive support each semester, a relatively small proportion of these students are persisting to certificate completion. This is partly due to the fact that two of the certificates have only lately been approved by the Board of Regents. Until the campuses could offer an approved certificate, students have been hesitant to commit to courses that may not apply to any degree. However, even in the established certificates, lower than expected numbers of students have committed to the degree.

This problem of low enrollments is being addressed by the Consortium through such efforts as the joint marketing materials and the outreach at AFN described earlier. These actions, together with the on-going recruitment at the individual campuses may serve to increase enrollments.

Student persistence is a more complicated matter, although overall persistence should increase now that all of the certificates have been approved. A review of student progress to date indicates that most students have focused on content courses—that is, the courses specific to the individual certificates—and have not yet attempted the writing, communication, computation and general science courses that also make up the certificate. And several of those attempting these courses have had to take incompletes although all students have successfully completed the content courses. This finding is not surprising. Evaluations of other certificate and degree programs in CRCD yield much the same results, most likely because students are engaged in the content but much less interested in general skills courses. This situation is more problematic once students enroll in an associate degree, where the general educational requirements are much more substantial. The efforts to strengthen science labs may help somewhat. However, attention needs to be given to the larger issue of retention.

Summary

Through observation of Consortium activities throughout the grant period, review of documents and student data and interviews with key Consortium members, the evaluator has collected information that documents Consortium success in meeting its goals and objectives.

There is ample evidence that the first goal—that of increasing ANSI capacity to assess and respond to community-identified needs—has been greatly enhanced over the past year. Securing the services of an experienced program manager has allowed the Alaska USDA Consortium to conduct more frequent meetings, engage in joint planning and marketing and reach out to other, non-CRCD ANSI campuses as well as the Hawaiian USDA Consortium members.

Cross-regional science faculty meetings provided an opportunity for regional faculty to discuss areas of concern and to identify ways in which lab sessions for distance science courses can be enhanced.

Community dialogs in four of the five regions provided opportunities for facilitated interaction with campus constituents and gave the participants a new vocabulary with which to communicate—a vocabulary that reframes the traditional university roles of teaching, research and service to those of learning, discovery and engagement. Local advisory council members, many of whom also participated in the dialogs and some of whom attended the region-wide council meeting in Kotzebue, contributed greatly to the development of certificate coursework including incorporation of local knowledge and Native Ways of Knowing. Both the dialogs and the participation in the advisory councils assist the Consortium to achieve one of the impacts identified for the program:

- Communities value and participate in planning efforts.

The final two certificates—ethnobotany and environmental studies—received final Board of Regent approval in September, marking the end of a long journey through the academic program approval process. The meat processing facility for the Northwest Campus was secured and will be ready for full use in Spring 2010.

In all, 87 students received USDA support during the year. In the two established certificates—Vet Science and HLRM—a cadre of students is making good progress toward certificate completion. One Vet Science student completed in Spring, and another is expected to complete in Fall, 2009. One HLRM student should also complete in the fall and several others are near completion. Both of the other certificates have a waiting list of students who have indicated that they will enroll now that the two have received final approval. One ethnobotany student is very near completion of all of the coursework for that certificate, some of which was earned while she was an exchange student with Windward Community College in Hawaii. One student completed the Associate of Science degree and five more are in the process of completing that course of study. These numbers, though small, are beginning to achieve several of the impacts identified for the project:

- Students find the USDA degrees valuable and enroll in the certificates; and
- Students gain knowledge in science, research, and other skills that lead to employment in the village and aspirations to assist their local communities

Student recruitment and retention remain a challenge. No new students have been recruited into the HLRM certificate and none from the Chukchi campus for the Vet Science program. The new HLRM program manager who will be hired this fall should have a positive impact on recruitment for that certificate. The Chukchi campus is widely distributing the promotional materials developed by the Consortium and will recruit in the villages this coming year. The two new certificates have a backlog of students who have indicated interest. Because of the late—September 2009—Board approval of the certificates, it may not be possible to translate this interest into actual admission into the program for the Fall 2009 semester. However, these students should be able to begin the certificates in the spring semester.

Student persistence will continue to require attention, particularly once the student has completed most or all of the content courses and must take the associated writing, communication, computation and science courses. A review of student progress indicates that while students do well in their content courses, they often fail to complete these general education courses. As more students seek the Associate of Science degree after they have obtained a certificate, this could become even more of an issue.

Recommendations

The evaluator makes the following recommendations based on the above findings.

Recommendation 1: Make the current quarterly ANSI meetings more effective by including more campus directors, avoiding scheduling conflicts and providing time during the meeting for sharing and discussion among members.

Recommendation 2: Continue efforts to establish a system-wide ANSI Consortium that can address common issues and advocate for programs and services to better serve the Alaska Native student population across the state.

Recommendation 3: Determine a role for the regional Consortium Advisory Council and formally appoint members from each region.

Recommendation 4: Provide additional opportunities for regional science faculty to participate in joint planning and program development, particularly around the issue of science labs.

Recommendation 5: Continue the emphasis on student recruitment through such efforts as attendance at the AFN Elders and Youth Conference, regional advertising and local efforts.

Recommendation 6: Address the issue of student persistence, particularly in the general education courses required as part of the certificate and Associate of Science degree.

The evaluator thanks all of those who contributed information and data for this report, in particular Elisa Bruns, the program manager, and the five USDA Campus Directors.