

UAF FY24 Cost Savings, Efficiency Efforts, and Revenue Generation

October 1, 2024 - Special UA Board Meeting



UAF continually explores opportunities for cost containment and efficiencies as a usual part of managing operations. This list is not comprehensive. Actions taken in FY24 are helping to streamline workflows, improve the student experience, ensure timely and responsive processing, modernize critical infrastructure, and generate revenue to support operations, where possible.

Improving the Student Experience

- Improved the technology tools, online sign-up, and staffing model for student advising, with the opening of the new Student Success Center. Wait times for student advising appointments decreased from 6 weeks to 30 minutes, on average.
- Removed the \$90 payment plan enrollment fee for students with confirmed incoming financial aid that has yet to arrive before the fee payment deadline. Over the past year, roughly 160 students have benefited from this change, resulting in an estimated total savings of over \$14,000 for students, and eliminating a barrier to entry.
- Automating over 50 manual electronic Financial Aid processes. This will lead to comprehensive award letters sent three months earlier to students.
- Moved registration periods earlier within terms (and associated academic catalog deadlines) to facilitate advising efforts to increase student enrollment in subsequent terms. This has resulted in year-on-year retention improvements of 1% to 2%.
- Implemented an AI-supported chat bot on student services web pages to modernize the student experience and provide a more modern experience. This will reduce call-center loads equivalent to \$50K savings in staff effort.
- Worked with Faculty Senate to retire a manual process for calculating 'Core GPA' for undergraduate admissions allowing application processors to shift from processing 20 transcripts per day to processing 100 transcripts per day.
- Merged separate Orientation and Graduation Fees into a single Matriculation Fee in line with national best practices, applicable in the student's first year. UAF now provides Orientation and Graduation experiences with predictable funding, increased student participation in Orientation to improve retention, and improved the student experience by eliminating the separate fee for Graduation. This also reduced a perceived barrier for participating in the celebratory ceremonies.
- Championed UA efforts to combine the UA Network and Facilities Fee into a single UA Infrastructure Fee. The fee is more simply applied on a credit hour basis, rather than a percentage, increasing the student's ability to understand total cost of attendance, while maintaining revenues for critical infrastructure support services.
- Contributing to UA efforts to improve the student experience through Banner (enterprise) systems, streamlining enrollment processes, registration, and automated workflows.

Faculty and Academics

- To address high market demand, Biology created an online Bachelors of Science in Biology program offering. As a result, the number of majors for the program increased from 264 to 375 between 2020 and 2024 via additional modality options, without substantially increasing the base costs for program delivery.
- Moved Academic Program Review to a faster 4-year cycle for continuous monitoring and improvements of ongoing academic programs.
- Centralized faculty database into a cloud base interface to serve as a platform for processing contracts, workload determination processes, and faculty related services. Minimized manual data entry, reduced

time spent on contracts, workload documentation and job request forms. Reduced manual faculty data entry by 88% (from 360 to 40 hrs).

Administrative and Facilities Efficiencies

- Participating in new UA risk/property insurance model, UA savings is \$2M.
- Contributed to a UA HR initiative to improve job advertising, simplified application processes, expanded flexibility in hiring manager roles, expedited background checks, and enhanced salary negotiation resources and communication. This increased qualified applicants by 800%, increased the completed application rate from 77% to 93%, reduced average time to fill staff positions by 30% (77 days in 2022 to 47 days in 2024).
- Data and process automation in Admissions (Salesforce) and Financial Aid (Banner) save 40 hours per week of staff time, equivalent to \$100K.
- UAF Athletics financial aid processes were improved, increasing the communications and timeline, in addition to some new tools to support coaches, advising and admissions staff. This reduced annual administrative processing by approximately 80 hours (8 hours/week during peak seasons).
- Restroom renewal in Moore-Bartlett dormitories (14 floors) reduced approximately \$26M in deferred maintenance from the FY24 DM/RR list, and will reduce average housing maintenance costs by at least \$70K annually with another \$100K in savings related to plumbing repairs. Addressing the deferred maintenance needs as part of this project will lead to fewer disruptions in student living areas and higher residency rates.
- The Student Success Center renewal removed \$2M in DM/RR for the Rasmuson Library, and another \$1.5M in fire alarm code corrections tracked within UAF's DM/RR lists.
- UAF updated the facilities inventory in FY24, resulting in 6 buildings being removed from the inventory (about 12,000 gsf) through demolition or sale.

Research

- In FY23, each \$1 in state general fund allocated to UAF research generated \$8.80 in revenue (ROI) from other sources.
- This year, \$3.4M in state R1 funding will support 84 existing UAF PhD students to advance their research progress over the next year and is providing support to 12 faculty members to help them mentor their students over the past summer. Additional efforts to recruit and increase PhD graduates are ongoing.

New Revenues

- The UA Museum of the North's Planetarium project is primarily funded by a \$7.4M anonymous private donation, the single largest gift ever received in UAF's history.
- Generous donors at UAF's 2024 Blue & Gold Celebration contributed nearly \$163K to support scholarships for UAF students. Ongoing philanthropic efforts support a multitude of UAF students, and academic and research programs.
- UAF sells excess power, after Troth Yeddha' campus needs are met, to GVEA through a power purchase agreement. This generates earnings of approximately \$1M, with net revenues of \$134K, annually.
- UAF enrollment is up 4.5% in student credit hours in fall 2024, increasing tuition and fees revenues, which support academic units, student services, and fixed costs.
- The UAF EdX platform has 117,648 learners (and growing), generating roughly \$363K in revenues for non-credit offerings, in addition to showcasing UAF course offerings to a wide audience.