



June 1, 2020

Andy Teuber
Gloria O'Neill
Sheri Burretta
UA Board of Regents
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, AK

Re: UA Transformation: Recommendations for UAS

Dear Regents Burretta, O'Neill and Teuber,

While we recognize your responsibilities as members of the Board of Regents and fully understand the fiscal challenges facing the university, we are writing to you because of your deep knowledge of the Native community and your demonstrated priority commitment to enhance Native education and the welfare of Native Peoples. We, Sealaska, Sealaska Heritage Institute and the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska, offer two parallel recommendations for your consideration.

UAS: Administrative Home for Rural Community Campuses

We believe that other measures should be considered outside of the merger of the University of Alaska Southeast into another UA university to meet your financial objectives. We are absolutely convinced that such a merger would gravely undermine a successful university system that has proven to be responsive to Native education. We also believe that a merger would not result in the financial savings you are seeking.

First and foremost, the metrics are clear in that the proposed UAS merger scenarios will not resolve the financial challenges facing the university as the UAS' share of the overall UA

general fund is only 7.6% of the overall UA budget. A merger may yield a \$2 million saving but at a cost of devastating the UAS. The university's financial objectives would be better served by merging the multiple duplicate schools and colleges within the UA system. In the interest of having the best data on which to make decisions, it would seem that having the financial savings resulting from merger of duplicate schools and colleges on hand would be necessary. Reduction of UAFs exorbitantly high administrative costs, which for years have been reported as excessive, should also be considered.

We urge you to conduct a thorough assessment of the actual cost saving that a merger of UAS into another UA system would achieve and to consider other budget reduction proposals such as the elimination of duplicate schools and colleges. We also urge you to take the time to review UAS' success in enhancing Native education as well as general education.

UAS has proven to be successful in partnering with Native entities and we are at a loss to see how this success could be maintained with UAS subsumed within another University system. We can envision that cost saving measures could result in the elimination of the UAS chancellor, deans and provost positions thereby reducing the effectiveness of our partnership programs. We also know that rural students are attracted to UAS because of its rural setting and nature.

Sealaska, Sealaska Heritage and the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians have been collaborating with UAS on multiple fronts. We are enclosing information on the Sealaska/SHI's and Tlingit and Haida's scholarships and partnership programs with UAS that reflect a near \$1.9 million infusion into UAS in 2020 alone. We anticipate that these programs will continue and the capacity to expand further exists. We would like to continue these scholarship and partnership programs, but subsuming UAS into a larger institutional framework poses the possibility that we may not be able to continue the collaboration.

We imagine that you have been apprised of the multiple reasons why UAS should be allowed to maintain its autonomy. In previous correspondence to you and the Board of Regents, we have outlined a number of reasons why UAS and Juneau makes sense as the lead for education with DEED, AASB, ACSA, SERRC, etc... all servicing the state, but are headquartered here in Juneau. Additionally, UAS stellar government and policy programs are further enhanced being in the Capital City. Moreover, UAS has the most powerful and underutilized setting. UAS has always led and relied heavily on eLearning and this approach in education will becoming increasingly significant in the years to come with the closure of schools due to the pandemic.

The merger of UAS into another University system will have many negative consequences as well. It will take several years to have UAS sunset their accreditation and be absorbed by UAF or UAA. Also UAS unique degree programs would have to be taught elsewhere leading to additional years for students to graduate.

Rather than merging UAS into another university system, we recommend establishing UAS as the administrative home for rural community campuses:

Placing rural community campuses under UAS administrative leadership will increase overall enrollment, building much greater alignment in academic and workforce programs, and

expanding options for students in smaller, more remote campuses. This could include making baccalaureate and graduate programs available in rural areas of the state where those options do not currently exist.

Making UAS the administrative home for rural community campuses offers the possibility of expanding distance programs at those smaller campuses. We are keenly aware that teachers will have to master distance education and e-learning approaches that have become increasingly important as a result of the closure of schools because of the pandemic.

Another consideration is to have the Alaska College of Education based administratively at UAS. The board adopted this action, but it was never implemented. This approach would unify teacher preparation and educational leadership programs statewide. It would build on UAS' natural assets in Alaska's coastal environment to expand on its interdisciplinary environmental science programs, including the joint fisheries program with UAF. It would also greatly enhance our PITAAS program with UAS that has been expanding statewide in the past few years.

With UAS serving as the administrative home for rural community campuses, it would allow UAA to serve as the urban-based university and UAF the research-focused university.

Southeast Alaska Tribal College

We have been discussing the creation of a tribal college for the last year that would work in concert with UAS. Our initial thoughts were that the tribal college would offer Native courses that would result in cost savings for UAS while the tribal college students would take general courses at UAS, thereby ensuring a continued cash flow into UAS.

After further consideration of the University's ongoing fiscal challenges and its projection for declining revenues juxtaposed with the financial and institutional strength of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska, Sealaska and SHI collectively, we would propose that UAS be transferred to a Southeast Alaska Tribal College to be operated by Tlingit and Haida in partnership with Sealaska and SHI.

We strongly urge you to direct President Jim Johnsen to initiate an assessment of our concerns and recommendation to establish UAS: Administrative Home for Rural Community Campuses and to provide the board a report on the financial and structural analysis that you may consider in your decision-making.

We would also request that you consider our proposal to transfer UAS to a Southeast Alaska Tribal College to be operated by the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska in partnership with Sealaska and SHI. We would be most pleased to meet with the appropriate staff and with the Board of Regents to begin discussion on this proposal.

Sincerely yours,



Joe Nelson, Chair, Sealaska Board of Directors



Rosita Kaaháni Worl, Ph.D., President, Sealaska Heritage Institute



Richard J. Peterson, President, Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

Encl. Sealaska/SHI/T&H UAS Programming

cc:

Senator Bert Stedman

Senator Jesse Kiehl

Representative Andi Story

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins

Representative Sara Hannan

Representative Dan Ortiz

Sealaska/SHI/T&H UAS Programming

Northwest Coast Arts

\$149,290 in 2020

As a result of a multi-year partnership between two Southeast Alaskan entities—Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)—an Arts Associates Degree with a Northwest Coast arts focus is ready to launch at UAS this fall semester 2020. Since the partnership was realized in earnest in 2018, SHI has brought more than \$500,000 to the program, course offerings have expanded significantly, student recruitment has been far more successful than anyone could have anticipated, and we finally have a much-overdue college degree program that focuses on the very rich and complex Alaska Native arts and cultures of this region. But the further success of this program depends on the ability to continue the established partnership between SHI and UAS, and to keep enhancing already well-functioning workflows and procedures between program staff at SHI and UAS who are well informed about the subject matter and passionate about providing our residents the opportunity to learn about the arts and cultures of THIS part of Alaska. Moving the administration of this program away from Southeast Alaska will severely hamper its integrity, and will sever the web of administrative and institutional support that has been carefully woven over time and is essential for every part of the program to function. It is critical to maintain the current structure for the program to be successful and remain sustainable—from securing funding to recruiting high-quality instructors and long-term, dedicated students, and importantly, developing the larger interconnected educational pathways in this field among Southeast Alaska school districts, UAS, and national educational institutions, such as Institute of American Indian Arts.

Our Language Pathway

\$606,765 in 2020

Providing funding for scholars to attend UAS to take classes in their heritage language is the foundation of *Haa Yoo X'atángi Deiyí: Our Language Pathways*. Outside of scholarships for 16 language scholars, our partnership with UAS also includes funding for additional Tlingit, Haida, or Tsimshian language professors and a program coordinator. Without UAS ensuring established Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian language classes, the success of our program would be nearly impossible. UAS has been collaborative and an institutional advocate for our Native arts, language, and way of life.

PITAAS

\$901,205 in 2020

Significant funding is provided annually from SHI to UAS through the Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska's Schools (PITAAS) program. The PITAAS program has been in existence for 20 years and has awarded more than 200 teaching degrees to Alaska Native teachers who now work in school systems throughout the state of Alaska. The program may cease to exist should the university be folded into another campus. The program is geared specifically to UAS and would not be able to simply move to UAA or UAF. It is more than merely a scholarship program. The program has stayed consistent, strong, and continuously funded by the Alaska Native Education Program due to our close proximity and working

relationship with our UAS partner. The program has components based on culturally relevant courses reflective of this region that we worry would no longer exist or be drastically reduced if moved from the region. It provides cultural orientations and lecture series to students and faculty as part of their development and training that could no longer be provided by SHI should the campus be relocated. It also provides PITAAS students with internships within our Juneau programming that we would not be able to provide elsewhere. Too many objectives of the program would be impacted to the point that we would no longer be able to successfully implement it in a way that meets the standards and requirements of our funder.

Thru the Cultural Lens

\$10,000 2020

SHI provides funding in the amount of \$10,000 annually to UAS in support of our Thru the Cultural Lens (TCL) grant. The purpose of the TCL grant is to empower educators and administrators of Alaska Native students to be culturally aware and relevant in their instruction, and UAS is an important partner in this mission. SHI's close collaboration and support of the UAS College of Education and Alaska Native Studies degree programs would be deeply impacted by a merger.

Sealaska/Tlingit and Haida Scholarships

\$195,135 in 2020

Sealaska Corporation provides more than \$1,000,000 in scholarship funding to students annually, \$126,635 of which will go directly to UAS this year and T & H provides an additional \$68,500. Should UAS be eliminated, the funding will be diverted to other schools, many of which may be out of the UA system altogether.

Total 2020 funding: \$1,862,392