

From: [Jared Weems](#)
To: [House Finance](#); [House Legislators](#); [Senate Legislators](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: UA Public Testimony for House Finance Committee Consideration
Date: Friday, February 26, 2016 2:03:37 PM

Dear House Legislators,

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Legislative District: 33, Rep. Sam Kito

All Alaskans are under intense pressure to help solve the State's apparent fiscal crisis, however you are our elected officials sent to represent our integrated interests. We charge you with common sense and the common interests inherent in our strong and caring populace.

Current proposed action to severely cut the coming UA budget is being done without introspection of our common goals, seemingly haphazardly, and without consultation from our own professionals whom know the facts and role of higher educational institutions.

The attempt to subvert two main pillars of any university's core functions by legislation while under political stress shows a lack of wisdom and sense in a time when it is most needed. Research and public services and outreach are indispensable and cannot be separated from higher education both financially and socially. These two specific aspects of University function are the whole point of higher education and student instruction. A single student given knowledge has no purpose if they cannot push knowledge forward or apply it to our communities and citizens. Learning for the sake of learning benefits very few and will likely lead to migration of those young people we do educate to more supportive, forward thinking states.

Personally, I am both student and staff within the School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences and would be directly impacted by such severe cuts to research and public service funds at UA. To conduct novel research in Alaska requires integration with locals on the ground across the state. Removing both funds and positions would essentially create a severe public knowledge gap in nearly every sector of the State's economy. Fisheries would be less informed and at risk, mining and resource extraction would be driven by outside, profit driven interests alone, and public voices and health would be strained to the point of non-participation or collapse, to name a few. I have been in Alaska for 10 years now and have never once considered permanently leaving for outside opportunities. Do not force educated, responsible, aspiring life-long Alaskans to leave the state they love just to satisfy a few million dollars savings near term. Our benefits through productive careers and socially aware families will in the long run be far more lucrative.

Overall, our brightest economic, scientific, and social minds have recently given a great deal of public testimony and editorials issuing the importance of always striving for a better higher education system, and the proposed cuts will prove detrimental to maintaining or growing our UA System and will prove to be economic 'peanuts' in terms of closing the State's large fiscal gap.

Cutting drastically to UA and State budgets at a time of low oil revenues and decreasing interest in resource extraction could only lead to an all out collapse of Alaska's economy. It's time to bring sense and professionalism back into this process, at a time it is so drastically needed. Please use the wisdom of professional individuals to which we all hold in high esteem, including President Jim Johnson and his evolving "Strategic Pathways", Dr. Gunnar Knapp and his sensibility and expertise on Alaska's economic past and future, and our elected Gov. Bill Walker whom has done an appreciable job of constructing a FY17 budget that is responsible and sensibly aggressive.

And don't forget to listen to your everyday Alaskans to whom you represent. All understand that a university's prime directive is to create and disseminate knowledge that is unbiased and trustworthy, represented in the products, documents, and students it creates and values. This encompasses all functions of which Rep. Wilson has identified as essentially non-important through lack of support proposed in these budget negotiations.

Thank you for your time and please take my testimony into consideration.
Sincerely for a strong Alaska and UA,
Jared Weems