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To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Senate-Proposed Funding for the University of Alaska
Date: Monday, March 07, 2016 8:43:28 PM

Dear Hon. Senators of the Senate Finance Committee ,

Please accept this as my testimony in relation to the Senate Finance Committee's deliberations on the FY 17 budget. Before beginning, be assured that I appreciate all elected officials' support for their continued support of education in Alaska. Moreover, note that I am one of Hon. Senator Click Bishop's constituents.

In brief, I fervently hope you'll consider supporting a balanced approach to Alaska's fiscal challenges. In other words, please embrace fiscal prudence as well as enhanced state revenues. I should note that I work for the University of Alaska Statewide and have also worked in the research wings of UAF. So too have I worked extensively in social and economic development endeavors throughout the world. These experiences have given me firsthand exposure to the development value of tertiary education institutions, particularly the University of Alaska.

I can cite two examples of efforts and relevance from the University of Alaska: first, over the past few years, the University of Alaska has undertaken significant outreach efforts designed to increase the fraction of Alaskans who stay in-state for their college educations. We've communicated with 8th graders to get them better prepared for the Alaska Performance Scholarship; we've worked with high school counselors to get high school seniors to apply to UA earlier; and we've reached out to existing UA students to better inform them of scholarship options at UA. All these efforts are designed to better support Alaskans at home here in Alaska.

Another example: UAF has undertaken a biomedical research capacity-strengthening project, funded largely by the National Institutes of Health. This will develop homegrown capacities to undertake research on issues such as rabies. Why do this? Because otherwise there will be increased reliance on researchers from the Lower 48. Do we really want Alaska's problems and challenges to be researched by grad students and their advisers from Universities in the Lower 48? That may well increasingly be the case if the University of Alaska is subject to draconian and precipitous budget cuts---researchers will be less likely to accept University of Alaska appointments and graduate students will find the University of Alaska a less desirable locus for the studies.

In brief, I urge that the Senate propose to fund the University of Alaska---a premier Alaska agent of social and economic development---at or near the level proposed by Hon. Governor Bill Walker. Alaska needs to take its place in the integrated and increasingly complex national and world economy. To do so, we need talented and skilled researchers and laborers.

UA President Johnsen is leading an impressive, multi-year effort designed to make the UA system as efficient as possible. It is critical that this measured and balanced approach proceed without calamitous funding cutbacks.

To this end, I am cognizant of the revenue shortfalls the State faces and appreciate the difficult job you face. Nonetheless, I support the balanced approach to raising revenues proposed by the Governor. I am sorry but I believe the days of cutting our way out of the budget challenges are past. I therefore look forward to hearing of your perspectives on enhanced revenue opportunities for the State as well as enhanced funding for the University of Alaska.

I thank you for your time and for your continued support. If you have any questions about this testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me. I thank you for your time.

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