

April 5, 2015

Senator Anna MacKinnon
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Email: finance.committee@akleg.gov

Re: Support of UA Engineering Initiative in FY16 State Capital Budget (SB 26)

Dear Senator MacKinnon and Senate Finance Committee members,

My name is Joseph Colonell. I have been a resident of Alaska since 1976 and I have been a registered professional engineer in Alaska since 1977. I was on the UAF faculty from 1976 to 1980, where it was my privilege to become involved in the University's statewide engineering educational programs. In 1980 I relocated to Anchorage to accept a position with an engineering consulting firm, but I maintained my connection with the University system as an adjunct professor at UAA, where I taught coastal engineering biennially until the mid-1990s. For the past several years I have been a member of the UAA College of Engineering Dean's Advisory Board.

During my 35-year consulting career I have worked for three major engineering and environmental consulting firms in Alaska, mostly as an operations manager. Thus, as an employer of engineers and scientists, I have also been a "customer" of the University system. I have always sought to hire engineers who have been educated in Alaska, rather than hiring engineers from "Outside." This is because I know that engineers educated at UAF and UAA are (1) well-grounded in the fundamentals and, (2) they are already familiar with the special requirements of engineering design and construction in northern regions. Alaska faces a shortage of qualified engineers. UAF and UAA engineering programs are uniquely qualified to mitigate that shortage, but the educational facilities at both campuses must be adequately equipped to ensure a continued supply of "Alaska-smart" engineers.

During the past four years the Alaska Legislature and the governor have supported an initiative to expand and enhance engineering facilities at both UAF and UAA campuses. This initiative is nearly complete. The state has fully funded the UAA facility as well as the majority of the UAF facility, which is under construction and will be enclosed by early 2015 and is scheduled for completion by early 2017. *This support of the engineering facilities at both campuses is greatly appreciated by the entire Alaska engineering community, but the job is not yet done.*

The purpose of this letter is to urge the Alaska State Legislature's support of continued funding toward completion of UAF's College of Engineering and Mines (CEM) Learning and Innovation Facility. We understand how drastically the state revenue picture has changed over the past six months; however, completion of the UAF CEM facility is critical to the mission of the entire university system. We appreciate all that the Legislature is doing to balance the state budget at this very difficult time. We understand that state dollars are scarce right now, but if construction at UAF is stopped now, it will cost much more over time if completion of the CEM facility is delayed, not to mention the impediment to continued growth of engineering education programs.

Funding delays have already added \$3 million to the project cost, now estimated to total \$111.6 million. To complete the CEM Facility, the university requests \$31.3 million in state funding. The university also expects to sell a total of \$10 million in bond funding for the project, all of which will be paid off with non-state funds.

If the CEM project is allowed to continue on schedule, it should be complete in early 2017, when it will provide more than 119,000 square feet of space for education and research. The CEM facility will also be home to the Alaska Center for Energy and Power and the new chemical engineering program, both of which are in response to calls by the statewide engineering community for greater collaboration between industry and the university. When completed the CEM facility will foster collaboration of students, researchers, and professors in an environment that creates work-ready graduates and conducts research that is vital to Alaska's businesses and communities.

Please consider including \$10 million in the FY16 capital budget to keep this project on track. Details of the CEM project can be found in the academic facilities section of the UA capital budget request, under the title "Engineering Building Completion."

Thank you for your past support of engineering facilities at UAF and UAA and for your consideration of this request for continued support. It is important to me, the engineering community, but most important, to the future of Alaska.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph M. Colonell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph M. Colonell, P.E., Ph.D.