

Operating
Budget Public
Testimony
University of
Alaska

Doniece Gott

From: bo <writebo@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 5:51 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: testimony

To whom it may concern:

I will not be able to attend the scheduled public hearing for Petersburg tomorrow. I live with my wife in Farragut Bay, which is located 25 miles northwest of Petersburg.

Times are tough, I know, but continuing to gut an already gutted system will not help our state in the long run. We need to find other ways to fund our critical government services. We should be looking to diversify our revenue sources rather than trying to solve the problem by cutting the existing budget. I do not want to see any further cuts to education, public broadcasting and the marine highway system.in particular.

The ferry system is essential to Southeast Alaska and it is already disabled from the cuts it has previously had. Further cutting would cripple this service that Southeast relies on for so many essential transportation services. I am opposed to the massive cuts proposed for the U of A system. A cut to our upper-level education programs is short-sighted and will NOT save the state money in the long run, it will only cause many smart and ambitious residents to leave because of the lack of opportunity to receive a quality education here in Alaska. We need these folks to stay in Alaska in order to help us make our state a better place to call home. Please do not cut any more funding for our education systems in Alaska.

I also am strongly opposed to cuts to public broadcasting. Every morning my wife and I tune into KFSK to listen to daily news and information, covering topics that range from local, to state, to nationwide. Without this essential news service, it would be hard for us to stay connected to Petersburg, or to stay informed about what's going on throughout our state and our country. There are no other radio stations that we can tune into to get these services. We love listening to KFSK for the thoughtful entertainment it provides, and we rely on the station to keep us abreast of local emergency, health, and safety information. KFSK is our lifelink to Petersburg from our remote homestead. Please protect those of us who live and work in rural Alaska! Public broadcasting, especially our local radio stations, are our life-link to our friends and neighbors in surrounding communities. If our small local stations lose their state funding, it is quite likely they will also lose their federal funding, which might be the writing on the wall for them all. Don't let this happen. Please.

I would like to see the state work to diversify its revenue sources, starting today. It is unrealistic to rely on the profits generated by oil production into the future. Let's look to support innovative, environmentally friendly technologies and industry. And in the mean time, let's use the permanent fund and perhaps a state income tax to help us through the transition.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Daniel Varsano

Farragut Bay

PO BOX 1714, Petersburg, AK 99833

Doniece Gott

From: amhjgd@alaska.net
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2017 9:51 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Re: State Allocation to University of Alaska: Senate Budget (resending as original was garbled)

Dear Sir(s)/Madame(s):

This is to request that you reconsider cutting \$16.2 million from the allocation to the University of Alaska in FY18.

Put in perspective, the UA system is the lion's share of Alaska's system of higher education. In this capacity, UA:

- does cutting edge research on biomedical, geophysical and other challenges facing Alaska and other Arctic areas; and
- produces Alaskan graduates in high demand job areas such as engineering, teaching and nursing.

To fulfill these twin missions, it is critical that the public have confidence that the State sees the UA system as a key player in developing Alaska's social and economic capital, its people. However, I feel that the State is giving at best mixed signals about the value it places in UA. I contend that these mixed signals have contributed, albeit indirectly, to the multi-year declines in enrollment experienced by UA, now pacing along at about 4% per year. Students and the public may well see a UA system that is being given neither time to effect Strategic Pathways nor all needed State funding as it embraces those developments.

The \$16.2 million cut being championed comes after many millions in cuts in the previous three years. This is a significant reduction! In closing, I urge that UA be given a chance to carry out Strategic Pathways, and be able to continue to fulfill its twin efforts noted above. This means funding it at the \$325 million level in FY18. This year's cut, if restored, represents an outlay of only about \$23 per Alaskan, surely a price worth paying to reinforce public opinion in the value that UA plays and in the confidence and trust that the legislature has in UA.

In the interest of full disclosure, I am a UA employee. Working there has given me a keen opportunity to see firsthand the human capital development value that UA provides, the graduates that it produces, the Arctic questions that it answers. Thank you for your consideration of the above.

Arthur Hussey
3875 Geist Road
Suite E-113
Fairbanks, AK 99709

On Thu, 16 Mar 2017 02:14:59 -0400, amhjgd@alaska.net wrote:

March 17, 2017

To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Michael West, State Seismologist *Michael West*

Re: Earthquake and tsunami missions at the university

I direct the Alaska Earthquake Center and serve as the State Seismologist. The organization I lead provides most of the state's information about earthquake activity, and provides the majority of the data used to issue tsunami warnings. Our information provides the foundation for the building codes used by every commercial contractor in Alaska. Our information is used to set home insurance rates for every Alaskan. Our information determines most of the tsunami evacuation zones that are so well labeled in our coastal communities. And our information is used by every major infrastructure project—every bridge, pipeline, dam, mine, port, and military installation—in the state. Engineers routinely make 10 million and 100 million dollar construction decisions based on the data we provide.

The Alaska Earthquake Center is housed at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and has operated for 30 years as a statutory responsibility assigned by the Alaska legislature (AS 14.40.075). The Earthquake Center is an example of a university facility—not a classroom, not a research lab—that has been tasked with executing fundamental responsibilities of government, in this case protecting lives and property against natural hazards.

The Earthquake Center is in its fourth year of severe budget reductions. In August of last year I suspended most field maintenance of the state's monitoring network. As a result, more than a quarter of our monitoring stations are offline as of today. With the seismic network in deteriorating condition, an earthquake occurring right now will take longer to detect, longer to assess, and we will do a poorer job. This is especially true, at the moment, in the regions of Yakutat and Kodiak.

I have deep respect for the challenge the financial committee is tackling. All I am asking is that you recognize that the large umbrella of the university system includes 24/7 operational facilities, such as the Earthquake Center, for whom budget impacts are measured not in years or decades, but in seconds.

Documentation on the suspension of field maintenance and subsequent performance updates can be found at <http://earthquake.alaska.edu/updates>

mewest@alaska.edu, 907.474.6977