

UA Metrics

The intent of the suggested metrics from Representative Feige are good – informing students and families of future prospects and impacts of completing a UA degree program. Below are links to the existing state systems for program accountability that the University of Alaska provides information for.

- Office of Management and Budget Performance Evaluation for support of annual budget development and outcomes accountability:
<https://omb.alaska.gov/html/performance/departments-details.html> (UA system and universities at the bottom)
- DoLWD's Alaska Training Clearinghouse: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/atc/> which provides detailed info on UA program performance through a joint effort of DoLWD and training providers throughout the State that Workforce Investment Act funds (WIA/TVEP). <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/training/etplist.pdf>

Each university has a program review process in place to evaluate program success and a set of indicators they use to meet accreditation requirements that are specific to their mission. Parnell's 2000 Missions and Measures bill mandated reporting on specific metrics and was replaced by the more flexible Performance Evaluation system driven by the annual State budget development process. Having the capability to refine and update metrics allows for continuous improvement and the ability to assess changing strategies put in place to meet mission requirements.

UA could begin to report on the topics listed in the draft language to students where data is available, aggregated by program, with additional context such as average student preparedness levels when entering, low income status and financial aid availability to students, and other factors such as unemployment rates. A number of these are not controllable by UA but are useful to track.

Meaningful measurement of employment outcomes has some challenges. Below is a recent summary of concerns and considerations UA put together for the federal Department of Education.

Unavailability of Data and Employment Outcomes

The University of Alaska believes the necessary, full range of data elements required to track and evaluate student access, affordability and outcomes is not currently available. In particular, we are concerned about the Department using data elements such as post-education employment rates, occupations and salary metrics as part of the college ratings system. If the Department elects to use these or similar employment data metrics, data must be reported in the context of local, state, national and international job markets. Further, existing state level, longitudinal, educational and employment data systems should be linked and expanded to incorporate information on international education and employment, for example. Participation in these systems should be mandatory for any institution or state receiving federal funding.

We believe that incorporating graduates' earnings into a college ratings system does not necessarily reflect the true value of higher education. In fact, we are concerned about being punished for producing graduates in critically important, yet lower-earning fields such as teaching, social work, etc. We are also concerned about how prospective students and their families will receive data if no proper context is given, as there are underlying factors that they may not take into account when looking at salary data. One example is earnings over time. Sometimes, initial salaries are less indicative of future earnings potential with some careers starting out rather modestly but after a few years producing higher earnings. Another example is the disparities in the earnings between men and women in the same fields, especially as women are in the majority of postsecondary students and baccalaureate graduates. Additionally, if the Department fails to provide the proper context, institutions that produce more graduates who head to Wall Street may overshadow institutions that produce graduates who head to Main Street.

In sum, graduate earnings are primarily in the control of the graduate, rather than the institution from which he or she graduated. As we shared, employment data cannot necessarily provide an accurate depiction of future expected student outcomes because many intangible factors play into a graduate's decision of what career he or she decides to pursue (or not pursue) and what industry he or she decides to enter.