

6771 Lauden Circle  
Anchorage, AK 99502

5 February 2013

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
State of Alaska Legislature

RE: Construction funding for engineering buildings at UAA and UAF

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am writing in support of funding for the completion of the construction projects for the schools of engineering at both the UAA and UAF campuses. An Alaska and Anchorage resident since 1985, I have seen tremendous changes in our built environment, and our home grown engineers are fundamental that growth. Here are some of the reasons I support this investment for the state:

- The Alaska Department of labor projects 120 engineering job openings a year in Alaska through 2018. The demand for engineers has been a constant in the state; as a resource dependent state we use engineers heavily, from getting the resources to market to supporting the people who develop the resource.
- We are facing a tremendous state brain drain as the baby boom generation begins to retire. Replacing those retirees with Alaska educated engineers will help reduce the climate learning curve for companies trying to train for the rigors of our environment. Hiring Alaska-trained engineers with families in the state, who want to stay in the state, also makes good economic sense.
- As a member of the design community of Alaska, I understand the emphasis on having home grown engineers. It is hard to find employees when construction is in a boom. And when there's a glut of people seeking to move to Alaska, as in recent years, you are faced with the large expense of training someone who may decide to jump ship in a year or two if the Alaska adventure turns sour for the employee or the employee's family. This is a very real cost to the business community. The environmental awareness an Alaskan brings to the design and construction industry is also very important.
- We have excellent engineering programs in place at both campuses. They are managing to train engineers with an aging and insufficient infrastructure. Why shouldn't this continue? The lack of classroom and lab space is starting to threaten ABET accreditation. At UAA the square footage per student ratio is one-third of the national average. The proposed building and retrofit of the existing facility is enough to accommodate current need, and is not based on an extravagant projection of future growth. UAF faces similar issues with inadequate and aging lab and classroom space.

- There is a ground swell of interest in engineering and math education at the high school level. Renewed interest in the sciences is a trend the state – and the country – needs to support. Creative energy is critical to our continued economic growth and well being, and it's the engineers who figure out how things are done. The technical expertise and practical knowledge of applied sciences as practiced in engineering are critical to develop.
- With the astonishing increases in the cost of higher education, more and more of our kids will have to stay in state for college due to financial necessity. Engineers are the people building the infrastructure to reach the resources in our resource dependent state. Let's get the programs in place that will allow our kids to be the engineers who contribute to the growth and development of our economy. They have a head start on an understanding of the climatic issues that dramatically impact development here, and the will to stay. The success of the ANSEP program is a wonderful example of how the university can grow the engineers we need in state and also serve the needs of our state wide community.

As a parent, and UAA School of Engineering Advisory Board Member, I would like to add how very excited I am about what is happening at UAA. Three of my nephews started school outside, and ended up finishing their degrees at UAA – one in engineering, and two in the construction management program. My daughter started in the WWAMI program this fall. UAA is becoming a brain trust for the Anchorage community, in the same way the UAF has long been for Fairbanks.

I encourage you to continue to support BOTH these construction projects. I cannot think of a better investment for our state than in the practical and creative education of our engineering degree programs.

Sincerely,

Catherine Call

CC: Senator Mike Dunleavy  
 Senator Bert Stedman  
 Senator Charlie Huggins  
 Senator Berta Gardner  
 Senator John Ellis  
 Senator Hollis French  
 Representative Mia Costello  
 Richard Reich, Chair, UAA SOE