



Esteemed Senators,

I want to take this opportunity to first of all thank you for the incredibly difficult work you are doing and your efforts to ensure quality education for all of Alaska's children. In this vein, equity is at the core of Alaska's Learning Network (AKLN). It is what grounds me as its director, and what was at the heart of my work as a long time high school teacher and counselor. In order to prepare all Alaska's students for a highly competitive world, it is critical that we provide them with vigorous high school courses. Our students must be ready, and not merely eligible for their future college and career pursuits. During this past year and a half managing AKLN at the University of Alaska Southeast, we've met this challenge by expanding our Honors, Advanced Placement, Core, Career Technical Education (CTE), World Languages, and Credit Recovery courses. Knowing how important relevant place-based and engaging courses are to Alaska's students, we've continued our efforts by having highly qualified Alaskan instructors create and teach such classes. AKLN's developed courses are therefore highly distinct and unique. For example, our Alaska Studies course was strongly vetted by both Alaskan historians and cultural specialists to insure regional sensitivity, authenticity, and relevancy. Our College Ready Math Class, developed and currently taught by both a university and a high school teacher, prepares students for credit bearing college math courses without remediation. A similar College Ready English course is now under development for our fall semester, along with [Documenting Alaska Native Issues](#), [Geology: Alaska's Story as Told by Rocks](#); [Alaska Science: STEM and Sustainability](#); [Introduction to Tlingit Language](#), and [Russian I](#).

Because AKLN is a robust learning network, we are much more than just another online distance education program. Moving a student from an isolated flat-screen environment to a vibrant online learning community takes a team of talented teachers, onsite supervisors, course mentors, and our recently hired academic counselor. Their efforts to personalize and individualize instruction have already produced positive results. I was elated that our completion rate rose from 68% last year to 78% this past fall. Students who are given opportunities to direct their high school experience are more likely to graduate and be prepared for reaching their post-secondary goals. AKLN endorsements and career focused pathways are planned to fill this need. Next fall, we intend to roll out an Honors, a Leadership, and an Indigenous Studies Endorsement, as well as a Career Pathway Endorsement in Medical Services and Education. Other endorsements will follow in subsequent years.

In order to impact our students, we know that we have to impact those who are directly involved with them. As a result we partnered with the UAS Professional Education Center to offer courses to Alaska's teachers, parents, para-professionals and administrators in coaching online learners, developing online curriculum, and how to be an online teacher. We are confident that these professional development courses will enhance online instruction across our state, and that this will subsequently increase student academic success. AKLN now serves 47 out of the 54 Alaska school districts and we look forward to reaching others in the near future. We've rolled up our sleeves in anticipation of another successful summer session while simultaneously building the foundation for a dynamic 2015-2016 school year.

Creating a talented workforce through educating all of Alaska's children is paramount to our incredible future. AKLN is well positioned for this endeavor and we are passionately on board with Alaska's Access and Success Network's campaign to "**Have 65 by 25**": our state's goal to have 65% of Alaska's working-age residents holding postsecondary credentials by the year 2025. With these thoughts in mind, I would greatly appreciate your consideration of having AKLN continue its vital work.

Respectfully yours,
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