

Comments for Senate Town Hall  
October 28, 2019

To the chair: My name is Maria Williams and I am a professor in the departments of Music and Alaska Native Studies at the UAA. I am currently the chair of Faculty Alliance.

Thank you for allowing members of the faculty to address aspects of UAA, UAS, and UAF in addition to the statewide academic administrative unit.

I would like to briefly address three topics – these include:

- 1) Shared Governance Principles
- 2) NWCCU 9/26/19 letter
- 3) Solutions to restructure that are reflective of current budget

Shared governance is a corner stone of higher education and is rooted in a system which provides the balanced perspectives of the four main stakeholders of any university – these include the students, the faculty, the staff and the administration.

Administration in the University of Alaska system includes the Board of Regents, who are appointed by the governor and serve for eight years. They are not paid, and volunteer and for this I wish to extend my ‘thank-you’s’ to the BOR. We also have a statewide administrative unit in which the President oversees, which includes a Vice President, and numerous staff, including counsel, CFO, and heads of Human Resources, IT, etc. The statewide administrative unit is not accredited, it does not have students, curriculum or faculty. This is an important point. UAA, UAF and UAS are separately accredited and the Chancellors are the CFO’s of each of their respective universities.

There is a Faculty Senate at each university and they are elected by their fellow faculty members and the officers include: President, 1<sup>st</sup> VP, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP. and past President. Each of these are for one year terms and they are part of Faculty Alliance. The Chair of Faculty Alliance rotates from the past Faculty Senate Presidents of UAA, UAS and UAF. So, I was elected as UAA Faculty Senate 1<sup>st</sup> VP in 2017, and served as President in 2018, and am not Chair of Faculty Alliance. The Vice Chair of Faculty Alliance is Heather Batchelder of UAS, and next year she will be the Chair of Faculty Alliance, and the following year it will be 1<sup>st</sup> VP of UAF Faculty Senate Jak Maier. The Faculty Alliance consists of 9 individuals – the three officers of the three faculty Senates and we meet twice a month, and have both a fall and spring retreat.

Staff Alliance is composed of staff that are elected from their respective university and consists of two UAA staff, two UAS Staff, two UAF staff, and two Statewide Staff. The current Chair is Matthew Mund of UAF and the Vice Chair is John Moore of UAA. They meet once a month and also have a fall and spring retreat.

The Student Coalition of Student Leaders represents the three student governance groups and the current chair is Nick Bursell of UAS and the Vice Chair is Teresa Wrobel of UAA. USUAA, USUAF, and USUAS are the student government bodies and they have annual elections.

When the UA BOR meets, there is a place at the table for the Chairs of Faculty Alliance, Staff Alliance, Student Coalition of Student leaders. Each of our respective governance groups have our own bylaws and constitutions and we uphold the values of democracy and shared governance.

The balance between administrative decisions must be balanced by the involvement and perspective of the staff, faculty and students. All our respective governance groups pass resolutions and often make statements. This is especially critical during these challenging budget times. However, the faculty voice has been muted. In addition the leadership of our Chancellors has been compromised by unilateral decisions being made from the SW President's office. Concern over a clear lack of shared governance are expressed in the recent Staff Alliance resolution (2019-01) regarding administrative consolidations, which states that staff have been left out of the decision-making process, the UAA Faculty Senate resolution (100-419-2) calling into question the leadership abilities of our current president, and an unprecedented letter written by seven former Chancellors demanding that the UA system reverse course and adopt shared governance strategies in decisions on restructure. The USUAF (SR 193-001) resolution which supports the Faculty Alliance resolution cited earlier. I can cite more resolutions if needed, but want to honor my time constraints.

The faculty acknowledge that the State of Alaska is in a budget downturn, and we are willing to restructure and re-vision our respective universities. However, it must be within the context of a process in which we work directly with our Chancellors and our shared governance groups.

The AAUP, the NWCCU, and the U.S. State Department of Education support the role of shared governance principles in higher education. NWCCU Standard 2.A clearly spells out the role of governance, and this is one of the issues addressed in their 9/26/19 letter to the UA BOR.

Now that we have covered 'shared governance 101', I would now like to address the 9/26/19 NWCCU letter. The NWCCU, is the accrediting body for UAA, UAS and UAF. It has a system of standards in which accreditation of the universities must adhere to <https://www.nwccu.org/accreditation/standards-policies/standards/>.

In addition to lack of the University President acknowledging shared governance principles, the NWCCU indicated concern over Standard 2.A.2, which requires that In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated, but we must be equally aware of NWCCU Standards 2.A.7 and 2.A.10, which require that each separately-accredited institution have its own full-time CEO, with true authority for running their institution and who reports directly to the Board. This is a reference to the chancellors, not the System President.

The Chancellors need to be considered by the BOR as co-equal executives, each of whom is endowed with authority to act in the interests of the entity for which they're responsible and to report directly to the Board of Regents. *This change alone will address much of what the NWCCU indicated as problematic in its 9/26/2019 letter.* To this end, the Faculty Alliance passed a resolution to have the UA BOR policies be amended in the sections on the roles/responsibilities of the System President, and the Chancellors. This is a solution.

The NWCCU recognize the Chancellors as being the leads of their respective universities and the current University President is acting as if he is the sole lead – this is one of the reasons that NWCCU wrote the 9/26/19 letter. This and the lack of acknowledging shared governance.

The UA BOR has written a reply to the NWCCU, citing State of Alaska Constitution, Art. 7 paragraph 2 State University; Art 7 paragraph 3 Board of Regents; and Article 02 of Chapter 14.40. I believe that the revision or amendments of the Regents' Policies do not preclude a revision of the Alaska State Constitution, but will defer to all of you on that.

In conclusion, the path forward should include the following, which is based on inclusive decision making using shared governance principles. I will read what Faculty Alliance sent to the UA BOR along with our resolution.

- Faculty Alliance noted that one of the solutions to the NWCCU 9/26/19 letter is to make several changes to the current Board of Regents Policy, in order to be in compliance with the accrediting body. We believe the sections of the Regents' policy that address the roles of the President (Regents' Policy Part II - Administration Chapter 02.01 - University President) and the Chancellors (P02.02.010. Academic Administration) should be amended.

We had a faculty team review these sections and have several suggested edits that will bring the three universities in compliance with NWCCU standards 2.A.1 and 2.A.2. We respectfully offer these to you, knowing that only the Regents' have the authority to amend their policies.

The Regents' policies were originally written when there was a single University - UAF. In 1974, when UAA became accredited, the Regents amended Board policy to reflect the role of the president and the chancellor; however, some of the policy language maintains remnants of the single university.

We believe that current Regents' policies have definitions that need to be updated. For example, the statewide offices are not accredited, do not have students, or curriculum, so perhaps a term such as "university system administration" is more accurate. This would provide further clarification of the roles of the university system and system offices, and the accredited universities.

Inclusive dialogue is a vital aspect of shared governance and Faculty Alliance

has an accompanying resolution asking the Board of Regents to update their policies. Thank you for considering these suggested revisions, which are in keeping with common practices that meet accreditation standards and requirements, and are found at other universities across the country.

Questions?