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October 30, 2019

Sonny Ramaswamy, President
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
8060 165th Avenue, Suite 100
Redmond, WA 98052-3981

Via Electronic Communication: sonny@nwccu.org

RE: The University of Alaska's Response to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities September 26, 2019 Correspondence

Dear President Ramaswamy,

In response to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) correspondence dated September 26, 2019, the Board of Regents met on Monday, October 7, and Monday, October 28, 2019. During the October 28th meeting, the Board reviewed and approved the University of Alaska's response and authorized me, as Board Chair, to send the following ad hoc response.

Ad Hoc Response Introduction

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska to provide the ad hoc response requested by President Ramaswamy's letter of September 26, 2019. In providing the response I want to note our appreciation for President Ramaswamy's clarifying and helpful comments as well as those of Senior VP Mac Powell at the meeting of the UA Board of Regents on October 7.

This response also covers and forwards responses from the chancellors of our three separately accredited institutions: University of Alaska Anchorage; University of Alaska Fairbanks; and University of Alaska Southeast.

Citing concerns regarding Commission standards 2.A.2 and 2.A.1, President Ramaswamy's letter urged the board, President Johnsen, and Chancellors Caulfield, Sandeen, and White:

> *to take immediate steps to provide clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership; and*
>
> *to continue to create a space for inclusive dialogue as the Board of Regents deliberates on the future structure of the University of Alaska System.*

Actions Taken and Planned

The board, the president and the chancellors have all heard the concerns expressed by the NWCCU, our students, faculty, staff and the communities they serve. At the October 7 meeting the board took three actions that address both of NWCCU's concerns in part:

1. Affirmatively ceasing consideration of changing to a single accreditation until at least 2021, and then only on affirmative direction, independent cost-benefit analysis, and examination of (and compliance with) accreditation requirements;
2. Ceasing system-driven academic program review processes until such time as the board consults with the chancellors and the president on a way forward;
3. Committing to hold a facilitated discussion with the board, chancellors, and president to clarify authority, roles, and responsibilities.

The first two actions halted processes that were the subject of concerns regarding inclusivity as well as clarity of authority, roles and responsibilities.

The third action provides for an unprecedented full day facilitated workshop including the board, the president, the chancellors, and governance leaders, scheduled for November 7. That workshop will focus on establishing a dialogue which will result in greater clarity and provide a useful check on equitable administration of authority, roles and responsibilities between the system and its institutions.

Clarity Around Authority, Roles, And Responsibilities

The University of Alaska has long had NWCCU approved policies in place providing guidance regarding the respective authority, roles and responsibilities of the board, its system president/board CEO, and the chancellors of our three accredited institutions. As the NWCCU is aware, the unprecedented financial challenges that threatened the entire system this spring and early summer created significant pressure to move quickly and without the usual level of input to consider structural changes. That stressed working relationships at all levels. As we move forward to face a less devastating but significant cut in state support, the board recognizes this as an opportune time to provide greater clarity.

Even prior to the upcoming November 7 workshop, the Board Chair, the president, and chancellors have engaged in dialogue that moves this process forward. Chair Davies has assured the chancellors that the Board is fully committed to clear and appropriate division of authority and responsibility between the System and its institutions, noting that a properly functioning relationship between the System and the institutions is essential, particularly in a time of scarce resources.

The chair has also clarified a number of fundamental principles for the president and chancellors in advance of the November 7 meeting. Those clarifications include the following:

- Board action on October 7 and Regents' Policy10.02.070 affirm that the structure of the UA System includes three separately accredited universities. Any change in or further affirmation of that status would require Board action.

- Formal allocation of authority and responsibility between the System and the board is a matter for the full board; the president is the board's executive officer, and must act in accordance with authority derived from, and subject to, board direction;
- Chancellors serve as trusted CEOs of the three universities, and as officers of the UA System, with responsibilities to both;
- Chancellors must have sufficient input into board decisions affecting the institution they serve, and sufficient control at the operational level, to carry out their duties and responsibilities to the institution and the system;
- Chancellors serve as the spokesperson and advocate for the institution they head, consistent with board policy and priorities;
- Chancellors' actions in all of these arenas are subject to board oversight through the president. Thus the actions of the president and the chancellors must be consistent with the board's direction and role in formulating policy and governing the University;
- Systemwide councils and administrative consolidations must not impair the chancellors' roles as CEO, but also must receive chancellor commitment to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible;
- The board and president will fully consider adjustments to relationships and processes that allow chancellors to better meet their responsibilities while accomplishing board goals.

The chancellors in their individual responses have indicated their agreement with these principles. Thus the Board, through the president and chancellors, is able to ensure that each institution is able to meet accreditation standards and state needs in a coordinated and efficient manner.

Further, as the NWCCU understands, the University of Alaska operates as a state university within a legal framework.

The University of Alaska, the Board of Regents and the University President derive their authority and duties from the State of Alaska's constitution and statutes. The Alaska constitution establishes the University as a single legal entity (not to be confused with a single accreditation). That legal framework provides the foundation and sideboards for clarity in authority, roles and responsibilities.

Space For Inclusive Dialogue on the Structure of the University of Alaska System

As noted above, on October 7 the Board acted to put a hold on consideration of changing to a single accreditation, as well as system-driven academic program review processes. These steps were taken to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements, and in particular, to ensure more inclusive and deliberative processes.

It is important to distinguish between the level of inclusive dialogue possible during a fiscal crisis and financial exigency, and during significant but manageable fiscal challenges. Shared governance is a recognized and important part of Board deliberations. Board policies not only provide for "alliances" composed of institutional governance representatives at the system level, but in recent years has provided those representatives with literal seats at the board table. Shared governance has been and is respected at the System level. Moving forward the Board is committed to processes that include input from students, shared governance and the public, as well as robust participation by University leadership.

Conclusion

We believe that the actions taken by the board on October 7, and the actions taken and planned since then, are responsive to the Commission's request for immediate action to create breathing room for inclusive dialogue, and to clarify authority, roles, and responsibilities. Ensuring that our governance structure is clear and functioning properly is an ongoing task to which the board and our institutional leadership is fully committed. Similarly, the Board has taken steps to ensure inclusive dialogue regarding restructuring, and is fully committed to obtaining and hearing that input.

We appreciate NWCCU's assistance as we move our institutions forward during these challenging times.

In addition to this response, and attached to this correspondence, are the ad hoc reports from the University of Alaska Anchorage, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the University of Alaska Southeast.

Sincerely,

John Davies, Chair
Board of Regents

cc: Mac Powell, Senior Vice President, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
University of Alaska Board of Regents
James R. Johnsen, President, University of Alaska
Michael Hostina, General Counsel, University of Alaska
Richard A. Caulfield, Chancellor, University of Alaska Southeast
Cathy Sandeen, Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage
Daniel M. White, Chancellor, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Enclosures (University Ad Hoc Reports)

University of Alaska Anchorage

Ad Hoc Report on Standard 2.A.2 and 2.A.1

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
October 31, 2019

Introduction

In its September 26, 2019 letter to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, the UA System president and the UAA, UAF, and UAS chancellors, NWCCU requested "clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership." In particular, NWCCU expressed concern relative to Standards 2.A.2 and 2.A.1.

> "In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered" (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.2)."
>
> "The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest" (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.1)."

NWCCU requests the clarification based on "on-the-ground observations" by Senior Vice President Mac Powell during a visit to Fairbanks on September 22 and 23 and "concerns related to the governance of the state's independently accredited institutions."

As per the letter, these concerns, and Senior Vice President Powell's visit, are situated within NWCCU's longer-term concerns about "ongoing efforts to respond to the funding challenges faced by the state's institutions of higher learning."

The NWCCU letter requires an Ad Hoc report from the institutions, either individually or collectively, by October 31, 2019. The chancellors worked together on a set of general principles to provide a common framework for each institution's report.

Within the above context, UAA respectfully submits this Ad Hoc report.

Background

UA Board of Regents' Policy and University Regulation regarding the division of authority and responsibility between the UA System and the accredited institutions are long-standing, with some sections dating back to the mid-1990s and with periodic updates to individual sections as recent as 2015. Over the years practices relative to roles and responsibilities were established, providing continuity through precedent that allowed some lack of clarity to persist within the policies themselves.

Recent extreme budget circumstances and the need to maintain institutional accreditation through a continuing period of challenging decisions revealed a need for greater clarity specified in Board of Regents' Policy and University Regulation as they relate to the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership. As CEOs of three separately accredited institutions, the chancellors are responsible for ensuring that the institutions are able to meet current NWCCU Standards so that institutions have the structures, resources, personnel, policies and procedures to sustain the quality of their educational programming and meet the institutions' respective missions. Moving forward, the new NWCCU standards require the chancellors to ensure that decisions, including resource

decisions, are guided by performance on student learning outcomes and student success metrics, with an overarching focus on issues of equity.

In response to the issues identified in the Commission's letter, at the Board's emergency meeting on October 7, the Board of Regents passed three motions, including a plan to hold a "*strategy session to look at the university's governance structure and to hire a consultant with expertise in accreditation and a mutual facilitator."* On November 7 the Board will hold a full day strategy workshop, with discussion about roles and responsibilities led by an external facilitator.

While traumatic and disruptive, recent events bring us to this moment of opportunity to revisit policy and regulation to clarify roles and responsibilities in such a way as to allow the Board of Regents to act as the Board of the UA System and president as well as the Board of each accredited institution, and the chancellors, as CEOs of separately accredited institutions, to ensure their institution continues to meet NWCCU standards and eligibility requirements moving into the future. It is also an opportunity to clarify the UA System President's role as the executive officer of the Board in its governance role overseeing the University of Alaska System.

Standard 2.A.2

In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered.

The following elements, agreed to by the Board Chair, Board Vice Chair, President, and Chancellors, will be discussed, deliberated and acted upon with and by the full board in an attempt to satisfy NWCCU concerns about maintaining sufficient institutional and operational independence, beginning with the meeting scheduled for November 7, 2019.

- Board action on October 7 and Regents' Policy 10.02.070 affirm that the structure of the University of Alaska System includes three separately accredited universities. Any change in or further affirmation of that status would require Board action. At present the Board Chair foresees no change in that status;

- Formal allocation of authority and responsibility between the System and the Board through policy is a matter for the full Board; the president is the Board's executive officer, and must act in accordance with authority derived from, and subject to, Board direction;

- Chancellors serve as trusted CEOs of the three universities, and as officers of the UA System, with responsibilities to both;

- Chancellors must have sufficient input into Board decisions affecting the institution they serve, and sufficient control at the operational level, to carry out their duties and responsibilities to the institution and the system;

- Chancellors serve as spokespeople and advocates for the institution they lead, consistent with Board policy and priorities;

- Chancellors' actions in all of these arenas are subject to Board oversight through the president. Thus the actions of the president and the chancellors must be consistent with the Board's direction and role in formulating policy and governing the University;

- Systemwide councils and administrative consolidations must not impair the chancellors' roles as CEOs, but also must receive chancellor commitment to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible;

- The Board and president will fully consider adjustments to relationships and processes that allow chancellors to better meet their responsibilities while accomplishing Board goals.

Specific actions from these deliberations may include: revision of policies and regulations to clarify roles and responsibilities, suspension or redesign of statewide councils, and redesign of administrative consolidations to provide sufficient chancellor involvement through a formal shared-services structure.

Standard 2.A.1

The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest.

While there are system level alliances of faculty, staff, and students outlined in Board of Regents' Policy 03.01.010, these are constituted by members of the university-level governance groups. The university-level groups carry out their functions subject to the authority of the Board through the chancellor, who also approves their constitutions. Shared governance resides principally at the institutional level.

UAA faculty, staff, students, and administrators participate in the governance of the institution through long-standing structures. These include the Faculty Senate, and its boards and standing committees; the Staff Council; and the Union of Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage (USUAA). Each of these formal governance bodies conducts business according to its constitution and bylaws, which outline the authority, roles, and responsibilities on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest. Meetings are open, and agendas and minutes are posted on the UAA Governance website, as are other guiding documents. Executive administrators are invited to attend the meetings, submit written reports, and address the bodies as part of the regular agenda, providing opportunities for ongoing communication and discussion. Representatives of these bodies also serve on other institution-wide committees. For example, the Faculty Senate and Staff Council presidents are members of the Full Council of Deans and Directors.

Chancellor Sandeen prioritizes transparent communication and dialogue, allowing for additional opportunities for the consideration of faculty, staff, student, alumni and administrators' views on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest. Some examples of this include:

- Monthly meetings and ad hoc meetings with leadership of faculty, staff, and student governance groups for an open dialogue on matters of mutual interest
- Regular meetings with full governance bodies for faculty, staff, students and alumni
- Regular "Ask Me Anything" sessions (at least once per month), open to all faculty, staff, students and alumni
- Regular meetings with UAA Alumni Association Board
- Regular meetings with various UAA College or Program advisory boards

- Regular updates via email, video, social media and other channels on issues of importance to the campus community
- A dedicated email account for capturing feedback from all internal and external campus constituents (uaa_feedback@alaska.edu)
- Weekly review of feedback by the Chancellor and cabinet members
- The use of data, shared publicly, for major decisions (like program reductions)
- Decisions and decision timelines are shared publicly; transparent view for stakeholders into how input was used in decisions
- Encouragement of staff and faculty to watch BOR meetings, even during work hours, for greater understanding of Regent actions
- Consistent messaging of student learning and student success as drivers for resource allocation and decision making.

Difficult decisions still need to be made, and Chancellor Sandeen is committed to transparent and inclusive processes to arrive at those decisions.

Conclusion

The University of Alaska Anchorage's chancellor fully accepts the responsibility to ensure UAA continues to meet NWCCU standards and eligibility requirements. She joins the other chancellors in seeking further clarification within Board policies and University Regulation regarding the "authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership," such that allow for this responsibility. Further, UAA is in full agreement with Chair Davies' request that the chancellors commit "to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible." Furthermore, UAA has been commended for its inclusive processes and will be happy to be of assistance as needed in future processes.

UAA appreciates the opportunity to respond to NWCCU's September 26 letter, and it appreciates the serious attention of the Board and President Johnsen to these matters.

The university looks forward to refocusing its attention to student learning and student success with a commitment to equity and inclusion.

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Ad Hoc Report on Standard 2.A.2 and 2.A.1

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) through the University of Alaska System President and the University of Alaska Board of Regents
October 31, 2019

Introduction

In its September 26, 2019 letter to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, the UA System president and the University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of Alaska Southeast chancellors, NWCCU requested "clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership." In particular, NWCCU expressed concern relative to Standards 2.A.2 and 2.A.1.

> "In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered" (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.2)."
>
> "The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest" (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.1)."

NWCCU requests the clarification based on "on-the-ground observations" and "recent media coverage and feedback from stakeholders," by Senior Vice President Mac Powell during a visit to Fairbanks on September 22 and 23 and "concerns related to the governance of the state's independently accredited institutions." As per the letter, these concerns are situated within NWCCU's longer-term concerns about "ongoing efforts to respond to the funding challenges faced by the state's institutions of higher learning."

The NWCCU letter requires an Ad Hoc report from the institutions, either individually or collectively, by October 31, 2019. The chancellors worked together on a set of general principles to provide a common framework and a common format for each institution's report.

Within the above context, UAF respectfully submits this Ad Hoc report.

Background

UA Board of Regents Policy (10.02.010) and University Regulation regarding the division of authority and responsibility between the UA System and the accredited institutions are long-standing, with some sections dating back to the mid-1990s and with periodic updates to individual sections as recent as 2015.

Recent extreme budget circumstances and the need to maintain institutional accreditation through a continuing period of challenging decisions revealed a need for greater clarity specified in Board of Regents Policy and University Regulation as they relate to the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership. Through the Board of Regents and with president of the UA system, the chancellors are responsible for ensuring that the institutions are able to meet current NWCCU Standards, designed so that institutions have the structures, resources, personnel, policies and procedures to

sustain the quality of their educational programming and fulfill the institutions' respective missions. Moving forward, the new NWCCU standards require the chancellors to ensure that decisions, including resource decisions, are guided by performance on student learning outcomes and student success metrics, with an overarching focus on issues of equity.

In response to the issues identified in the Commission's letter, the Board of Regents passed the following three motions:

"The Board of Regents approves ceasing consideration of a single accreditation until such a time as the University of Alaska Fairbanks secures its Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accreditation in 2021. Subsequently, if the board chooses to actively consider single accreditation it will direct the president by formal action to conduct an independent cost benefit analysis and clearly examine accreditation issues."

"The Board of Regents approves suspending the statewide academic program review process until such a time as the board can get consultation from the chancellors and the president on a way forward."

"The Board of Regents approves meeting the last week of October to review the coordinated response to the accrediting agency, to look at a timeline and plan for a strategy session to look at the university's governance structure and to hire a consultant with expertise in accreditation and a mutual facilitator."

On November 7 the Board will hold a full day strategy workshop, with discussion about roles and responsibilities led by an external facilitator.

Standard 2.A.2

In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered.

The following elements, outlined in an October 21 letter from Board Chair John Davies to the three chancellors and agreed to by the Board chair, Board vice chair, president, and chancellors, will be discussed, deliberated and acted upon with and by the full board in order to address NWCCU concerns about maintaining sufficient institutional and operational independence, beginning with the meeting scheduled for November 7, 2019.

- Board action on October 7 and Regents' Policy10.02.070 affirm that the structure of the University of Alaska System includes three separately accredited universities. Any change in or further affirmation of that status would require Board action;

- Formal allocation of authority and responsibility between the System and the Board through policy is a matter for the full Board; the president is the Board's executive officer, and must act in accordance with authority derived from, and subject to, Board direction;

- Chancellors serve as trusted CEOs of the three universities, and as officers of the UA System, with responsibilities to both;

- Chancellors must have sufficient input into Board decisions affecting the institution they serve, and sufficient control at the operational level, to carry out their duties and responsibilities to the institution and the system;

- Chancellors serve as the spokesperson and advocate for the institution they head, consistent with Board policy and priorities;

- Chancellors' actions in all of these arenas are subject to Board oversight through the president. Thus the actions of the president and the chancellors must be consistent with the Board's direction and role in formulating policy and governing the University;

- Systemwide councils and administrative consolidations must not impair the chancellors' roles as CEO, but also must receive chancellor commitment to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible;

- The Board and president will fully consider adjustments to relationships and processes that allow chancellors to better meet their responsibilities while accomplishing Board goals.

Standard 2.A.1
The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest.

While there are system level alliances of faculty, staff, and students outlined in Board of Regents Policy 03.01.010, these are constituted by members of the university-level governance groups. The university-level groups carry out their functions subject to the authority of the Board through the chancellor, who also approves their constitutions. Shared governance resides principally at the institutional level.

UAF faculty, staff, students, and administrators participate in the governance of the institution through long-standing structures. These include the Faculty Senate, and its boards and standing committees; the Staff Council; and the Associated Students of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (ASUAF). Each of these formal governance bodies conducts business according to its constitution and bylaws, which outline the authority, roles, and responsibilities on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest. Meetings are open, and agendas and minutes are posted on UAF websites, as are other guiding documents. Executive administrators are invited to attend the meetings, submit written reports, and address the bodies as part of the regular agenda, providing opportunities for ongoing communication and discussion. Representatives of these bodies also serve on other institution-wide committees, including Provost's Council and Chancellor's Cabinet.

Chancellor White and his executive team have established many pathways for communication, dialogue, and feedback. For example, the chancellor and provost meet regularly with leadership of faculty, staff, and student governance groups for an open dialogue as well as full governance bodies for faculty, staff, and students. Information is broadly shared through websites, email, video, social media and list-serves as well as the Cornerstone campus newsletter that is distributed to students, staff, and faculty. Chancellor White regularly hosts open forum events to share information and invite ideas from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members.

Campus leaders meet frequently with alumni association leadership, advisory boards, and community groups.

As UAF goes through the academic and administrative changes connected to budget reductions, the chancellor has been open and transparent about the challenges, decisions, and timelines in place and he is committed to including all levels of governance in the process.

Conclusion

The University of Alaska Fairbanks' chancellor will continue to work with the Board and the president to clarify Board policies and University Regulation regarding the *"authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership*" where needed. Further, UAF is in full agreement with Chair Davies' request that it is the chancellors' responsibility *"to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible."*

UAF appreciates the opportunity to respond to NWCCU's September 26 letter, and remains committed to meeting all of the Commission's standards and eligibility requirements.

University of Alaska Southeast

Ad Hoc Report on Standards 2.A.2 and 2.A.1

UNIVERSITY of ALASKA SOUTHEAST

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

October 31, 2019

INTRODUCTION

On September 26, 2019, NWCCU President Ramaswamy wrote to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, UA President James Johnsen, and chancellors at the University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of Alaska Southeast expressing "continued concern as to the ongoing efforts to respond to the funding challenges face by [Alaska's] institutions of higher learning." Dr. Ramaswamy's letter noted previous correspondence encouraging "each of the independently accredited institutions and the System and Board to find ways to address the funding challenges in a way that is inclusive, transparent, and participatory for constituents."

Specifically, the letter voiced concern that our university as well as UAA and UAF may have failed to meet NWCCU standards 2.A.2 and 2.A.1. The first standard (2.A.2) requires that:

> "*In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly delineated and equitably administered."*

The second standard (2.A.1) states:

> *The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest."*

The backdrop to these concerns, of course, is the challenge presented to the UA System and the three accredited universities of unprecedented budget reductions. These cuts, and proposed restructuring to address them, have stressed existing governance systems and decision-making structures and processes. President Ramaswamy's letter urges UA leadership to "take immediate steps to provide clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and their leadership." His letter also urges continued attention to creating a space for inclusive dialogue as the Board of Regents deliberates on the future structure of the UA system.

In response to President Ramaswamy's letter, UA leaders—including the chair of the UA Board of Regents, President Johnsen, and the three chancellors—have met to discuss general principles that will proactively guide the System's response to NWCCU concerns. Those principles and anticipated actions—which are shared by all in UA leadership—are outlined below. More specifically, this ad hoc report reflects the perspective and response of the University of Alaska Southeast to the concerns raised about the two standards.

UAS RESPONSE TO CONCERN ABOUT STANDARD 2.A.2:

At the System level, the Board of Regents responded to the NWCCU concerns at its October 7 emergency meeting by adopting three motions: 1) approval to cease consideration of a single accreditation for the University of Alaska, 2) approval to suspend the statewide academic program review process, and 3) agreement to hold a special meeting to look at the university's governance structure in light of NWCCU concerns, using a facilitated format with consultants who have expertise in accreditation.

The effect of these actions was to reaffirm Regents' policy P10.02.070 stating that the structure of the UA System includes three separately accredited universities, each led by a chancellor who has responsibilities both as the CEO of their respective university and service as an officer of the UA system. The Board's action set in motion planning for an extraordinary full day facilitated meeting of the Board, the System president, chancellors, and governance leaders that is scheduled for November 7, 2019. UA leadership recognizes that such a meeting is needed to consider the allocation of authority and responsibilities between the universities and the UA System, since that allocation is in essence the allocation of authority and responsibility between the Board and the chancellors. The expressed goal of this meeting, and perhaps further meetings, is to address the expectations of Standard 2.A.2; that is, to revisit and clarify the division of authority and responsibility between the System and its separately-accredited universities.

Moreover, the NWCCU's expression of concern led to agreement between the Board Chair, Vice Chair, President, and chancellors about the following:

- Agreement that Board action on October 7 and Regents policy P10.02.070 affirm that the structure of the University of Alaska System includes three separately accredited universities. Any change in or further affirmation of that status would require Board action. The Board chair indicates that he sees no change in that status at present;
- Formal allocation of authority and responsibility between the System and the Board through policy is a matter for the full Board; the president is the Board's executive officer, and must act in accordance with authority derived from, and subject to, Board direction;
- Chancellors serve as trusted CEOs of the three universities, and as officers of the UA System, with responsibilities to both;
- Chancellors must have sufficient input into Board decisions affecting the institution they serve, and sufficient control at the operational level to carry out their duties and responsibilities to the institution and the System, consistent with NWCCU standards;
- Chancellors serve as the spokesperson and advocate for the institution they head, consistent with Board policy and priorities;

- Chancellors' actions in all of these areas are subject to Board oversight through the president. Thus, the actions of the president and chancellors must be consistent with the Board's direction and role in formulating policy and governing the University;
- Systemwide councils and administrative consolidations must not impair the chancellors' roles as CEO, but also must receive chancellor commitment to coordinate, streamline student experiences, and reduce expenses where feasible; and
- The Board and president will fully consider adjustments to relationships and processes that allow chancellors to better meet their responsibilities while accomplishing Board goals.

Actions discussed that may arise from further review include revision of Board policies and university regulations to clarify roles and responsibilities, revision of roles, responsibilities, and practices of statewide councils, and/or suspension or redesign of administrative consolidations to ensure sufficient operational independence at the university level, to include consideration of broader shared services models. Any significant actions of this sort will take some time to complete, but UA leaders have collectively expressed a shared commitment to substantive review of these roles and responsibilities.

UAS RESPONSE TO CONCERN ABOUT STANDARD 2.A.1:

Shared governance in the UA System resides both at the institutional level and at the System level. The foundation for incorporating meaningful faculty, staff, and student engagement at the System level is having meaningful systems of shared governance at the three accredited universities.

The University of Alaska Southeast has long supported shared governance structures and processes, including its UAS-wide Faculty Senate and Staff Council, plus student governments at our three campuses. Each of these operates under an approved constitution and bylaws which outline their authority, roles, and responsibilities. Information about these governance groups is available on the university's website. Representatives from these groups commonly serve on university-wide committees, including Chancellor's Cabinet, the Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee, and the Master Plan Implementation Committee, to name only a few. Ways in which the views of faculty, staff, and students are incorporated meaningfully into decision-making at UAS include the following:

- Roles and responsibilities of administration and shared governance groups, including Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and United Students of the University of Alaska Southeast, are codified in policy and are well understood
- UAS shared governance groups meet regularly and operate under approved constitutions and bylaws
- Chancellor meets regularly with leadership of faculty, staff and student governance

- Chancellor meets monthly with the Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee made up of representatives from deans and directors, governance groups, and leaders of Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan campuses
- Chancellor meets monthly with the Chancellor's Cabinet, which includes leaders from all academic and administrative areas, plus representatives from governance groups Chancellor holds regular town halls for students, staff, and faculty as well as town halls for community members
- Chancellor meets regularly with the campus advisory councils composed of business, government, and education community leaders in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka
- Chancellor meets regularly with the UAS Alumni and Friends Association Board
- Chancellor provides regular updates via "Chancellor's Comments" and other emails, social media, campus newspaper, and other channels on issues of importance to the campus community
- Chancellor commonly communicates with local communities via radio and newspapers
- Chancellor and Executive Cabinet meet weekly to discuss issues, plan, and review feedback that may have been received
- UAS holds an "Annual Priorities" meeting with shared governance representatives each year in August to review goals and metrics for the upcoming academic year
- Chancellor meets with all faculty and staff during Convocation (August) and Spring Start-up (January) to discuss the state of the University
- Chancellor has an open door policy and makes himself available for meetings with all members of the university community
- Timelines and outcomes of key university decisions are shared publicly
- Data are shared publicly and available on the UAS website

UAS completed its renewal of NWCCU accreditation just six months ago, with a site visit in Juneau in April 2019 and a meeting with the full Commission in June 2019. UAS was pleased to receive commendation from the NWCCU that highlighted efforts at "inclusivity" and support for shared governance. The nine-member review team that visited the UAS Juneau Campus wrote in its report that:

> *…governance structures for UAS are clear and well understood across the relevant constituents, and the division of authority is organized effectively. Faculty, staff, and students have avenues to share their perspectives through Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and the United Students of the University of Alaska Southeast. Conversations with leaders from each of these groups confirmed that shared governance is valued on campus.*

The Commission's letter of July 12, 2019 reaffirming UAS accreditation offered commendation for "robust participation in the accreditation process. Faculty, staff, and student forums were all standing-room only events in which many constituents shared their dedication to and appreciation for the university." Furthermore, the Commission commended UAS for "its success at integrating three campus locations into one university with shared vision and values. The level of collaboration and consistent support among the three campuses is remarkable."

We at UAS believe these recent findings by NWCCU reviewers, affirmed as commendations by the Commission as whole, demonstrate our enduring commitment at the University level to decision-making structures and processes that provide for consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest (NWCCU Standard for Accreditation 2.A.1).

CONCLUSION

The University of Alaska Southeast is fully committed to meeting NWCCU standards and eligibility requirements. Our recent successful reaccreditation reflects the hard work and commitment of our faculty, staff, administrators, and students to that shared goal. We are committed to working with colleagues at the other two separately accredited universities, with UA System leaders, and with the UA Board of Regents to take both immediate and long-term actions that provide clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska System and its respective institutions and leaders. In our view, the actions of the Board of Regents at its emergency meeting on October 7 and its commitment to an exceptional board review of roles and responsibilities systemwide at its planned November 7 meeting demonstrate the seriousness with which we take the issues raised by Dr. Ramaswamy's letter and our ongoing efforts to maintain NWCCU accreditation in good standing.