

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT MEETING  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 8, 2012

8:04 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Alan Dick, Chair  
Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice Chair  
Representative Eric Feige  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Sharon Cissna

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair  
Senator Joe Thomas, Co-Chair  
Senator Bettye Davis, Vice Chair  
Senator Hollis French  
Senator Gary Stevens

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Scott Kawasaki

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: BOARD OF REGENTS - UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

- HEARD

SUPERINTENDENT PRESENTATION: ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MICHAEL POWERS, Chair  
Academic & Student Affairs Committee  
Board of Regents  
University of Alaska (UA)  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a presentation from the UA Board of Regents.

RICHARD CAULFIELD, Provost and Executive Dean  
Career Education,  
University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the joint education meeting presentation from the UA Board of Regents.

DIANE HIRSHBERG, Associate Professor of Education Policy  
Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER)  
Board of Regents  
University of Alaska (UA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the joint education meeting presentation from the UA Board of Regents UA.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:04:10 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR KEVIN MEYER** called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:04 a.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Dick, Feige, P. Wilson, Pruitt, and Seaton, and present from the Senate Education Standing Committee were Senators Meyer, Davis, Thomas, French, and Stevens. Representative Cissna arrived while the meeting was in progress.

**Board of Regents - University of Alaska**

[8:04:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER announced that the first order of business would be a presentation from the Board of Regents.

8:06:28 AM

MICHAEL POWERS, Chair, Academic & Student Affairs Committee, Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA), began with a brief personal biography, acknowledged the contributors who prepared the report then provided the overview on behalf of the UA Board of Regents, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Prepared in accordance with Senate Bill 241 of the 25th legislative Session. A Report to the legislature on teacher preparation/retention/ and recruitment by the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska.

Intent is to:

1. Provide a brief overview of the numbers of teaching education graduates
2. Identify the shortage areas in the Alaskan teaching workforce
3. Highlight each of U of A's MAU's [major academic unit(s)] efforts to attract, train, and retain qualified teachers

Here are some of the relevant numbers you will first see in the report:

1. In the past 5 years, between 2006 and 2011, U of A has graduated about 200 new teachers annually
2. On average, half of U of A graduates begin teaching in AK the fall after graduation, rising to 60% within 3 years
3. U of A graduates made up 12% of new hire teachers across the state in 2011
4. Number of principals prepared by U of A has increased substantially with new UAS [University of Alaska Southeast] educational program
5. Special Education remains a hard-to-fill challenge area

a. Nevertheless, between 2006 and 2011, the U of A more than doubled the annual number of special education graduates, from 29 in 2006 to 68 in 2011

6. Math and certain positions are also hard to fill. The numbers fluctuate, but - in general- the number of newly hired math teachers has remained steady over the past 7 years: 12-15 math teachers are hired annually.

7. Relative to Efforts to Attract - Train - and Retain qualified teachers:

a. The U of A provides an umbrella of programs and strategies through:

i. UAA [University of Alaska Anchorage] College of Education

ii. UAF [University of Alaska Fairbanks] School of Education

iii. UAS School of Education

iv. AK Teacher Placement System

v. Future Educators of AK program

vi. And the AK Statewide Mentor Project

b. In addition, U of A offers:

i. A variety of college-bridging programs to help with transition to postsecondary education

ii. Programs are found on both main and branch campuses

c. As a fairly new regent, I have been struck by the level of cooperation across all three campuses, and specifically point to:

i. Teacher Education Plan which the Deans and Provosts at the three MAUs developed, laying out 4 common goals:

1. Recruit and retain more AK students in Education

2. Increase program access through multiple delivery methods

3. Enhance Educator Preparation programs in Special Ed and Math and Science

4. Conduct research to identify causes/solutions for Ed challenges. I have been very impressed with shared strategy planning sessions

8. Brief description of some challenging areas

a. Significant efforts have focused on attracting and prepare AK Native and other diverse populations

Teacher turnover is often cited as a concern, especially in rural areas

b. Consequently, many districts are forced to recruit from out-of-state

c. These out-of-state recruits often struggle with adjusting to their new environment and to address this challenge:

i. Each MAU has specific outreach efforts

ii. Distance education technologies have been instrumental

iii. The number of AK Native students has been fairly steady 8.7% of new teacher graduates are Alaskan Native, vs. 4.5% of all teachers currently in AK schools

d. At UAA, the Department of Teaching and Learning is supporting a cohort of paraprofessionals who want to become elementary teachers

i. An advisory group made up of College of Education, College of Arts & Science, Kenai Peninsula College and educators in the village of Chevak are working to provide coursework for 15 individuals pursuing AA [Associate in Arts] and BA [Bachelor of Arts] degrees

ii. Department has established a "concierge" service to help students navigate the system, same in healthcare

iii. This program has been funded by a private donor who wants to see rural expansion in teacher education efforts

e. UAS has two US Dept of Ed [U.S. Department of Education] teacher programs for AK Natives

i. PITAAS: Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for AK Schools and a

ii. Village Teacher program focused on providing AK Native teachers in obtaining advanced degrees. Roughly 20 AK Native Teachers are beginning a Reading Specialist Masters program this spring.

f. UAF has a variety of outreach efforts to attract, prepare and retain teachers:

i. All certification and degree programs are offered through distance education and Faculty continues to develop additional online course offerings as well as champion efforts to modernize its IT [information technology] systems for enhanced connectivity

ii. School of Education maintains a staff advisor dedicated to rural student needs

iii. On rural visits, faculties meet with school and community officials to understand and construct solutions to local needs

iv. School of Education collaborates with Rural Student Services to assist with special requests

v. School of Education also offers a one-week rural practicum for Fairbanks-based elementary & secondary candidates

vi. School of Education recently internally funded a \$12K grant to study teacher retention factors in Northern AK

vii. School of Education continues to house the AK Native Teacher Preparation Program grant that provided financial support to AK Natives in final 3 years of their programs. Grant is a partnership between UAS school of Education, AK Native Education Association, Association of Interior Native Educators, and UAF College of Rural and Community Development, again, another clear signal of inter-campus and community collaboration

[8:16:26 AM](#)

The 2012 report also speaks to 5 other Key Efforts to Attract/Train and Retain [Educators]

1. AK Teacher Placement Service.
  - a. University established the service in 1978
  - b. It is a partnership between school districts across the state and U of A
  - c. Serves as a statewide clearinghouse to match interested teachers/principals with positions throughout AK
  - d. Responds to thousands of inquiries annually
2. Future Educators of AK Program
  - a. Statewide collaborations of AK Native K-12 students interested in teaching
  - b. Partnership among U of A, K-12 school districts and community organizations such as AK Native Education Association
  - c. Funded by the US Dept of Ed since 2005
  - d. Works with 23 school districts across the state
  - e. 600 Students are currently enrolled
  - f. Recently all MAUs approved a 100-level course transferable across all MAUs
3. AK Statewide Mentor Program

a. An individualized support program for 1st and 2nd year teachers

b. Focus on the diverse academic and cultural backgrounds of AK students

c. This Academic year, the program has 24 mentors, working in 34 school districts

d. Project was recently award a \$15M grant by US Dept of Ed, matched by \$1.5M in private donations

4. University of Alaska Outreach and College & Career Bridging Program

a. Last year U of A conducted a career bridging survey - 266 programs analyzed related to 1) program description 2) program organization and location and 3) funding source

b. Findings:

i. 168 Outreach/Bridge programs use U of A general funds

ii. 82 programs receive federal funding

iii. 68 programs receive state funding

iv. 34 programs receive private funding

v. 72 Programs designed to lead students to a degree program

vi. 77 programs were considered partnerships, including dual credit collaborations with school districts

vii. There are 117 youth outreach programs - not resulting in a credit but strong public information: job fairs, college nights, on-campus education sessions

viii. 24% of the programs focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) issues

ix. Roughly 43 programs specifically note the integration of cultural and indigenous knowledge and are funded by US Dept of Ed

x. Efforts are underway to better track and measure the effectiveness of these programs. Core to the mission of the university

5. A fifth area of general focus related to attracting, training and retaining teachers relates to Alternative Certification in AK

a. This is an area which allows teacher candidates who already hold a BA, to be employed as a teacher while earning their certificates.

b. As of this past summer, 6 educators had completed this program, and 23 others were pursuing their certificates

c. UAF has graduated 51 educators using this alternative certification process.

d. UAA operated a program from 2005 to 2010 and graduated 21 secondary teachers.

Finally, I will touch on Recommendations for Educational Policy Research

In summer of 2010, U of A Foundation awarded ISER (Institute of Social and Economic Research) at U of A funding to start the Center for AK Education Policy Research (CAEPR)

CAEPR's mission is to conduct collaborative, interdisciplinary research and analysis around issues of:

Educational access

Equity and Excellence in the "AK Context," across early childhood, primary, secondary, higher and adult education.

In October this past year, CAEPR set the following priorities for research in the coming year:

1. Identification of learning readiness models
2. Exploration of system change in education, especially related to students at-risk.
3. Identification of models for preparing AK Native teachers and administrators
4. Identification of educator retention models
5. Identification of indigenous language models that lead to successful learning

[8:21:12 AM](#)

With that, I'd like to simply recap the objectives of the University of Alaska for AK's Schools 2012 report, conclude my remarks and ask if we can answer questions you may have:

1. Relative to a brief overview of teaching education graduates, specifically related to key number
  - a. U of A tends to graduate 200 Alaskan teachers per year
  - b. Alaskan graduates make up 12% of new hires
2. Relative to shortage areas in the Alaskan teaching workforce
  - a. Special Education is particularly hard to fill, but Special Education hiring's have doubled in last 5 years
  - b. Math and Science difficult to fill, and like most of Lower 48, will likely continue to be challenging area.
3. Finally, some of the key programs that highlight U of A's efforts to attract, train, and retain qualified teachers include:

AK Teacher Placement Service: 33 year clearing house effort which responds to thousands of inquiries annually about teaching opportunities across AK

Future Educators of Alaska Program: 66 AK native students participating in the program

The Alaska Statewide Mentor Program: Project recently awarded a \$1M grant of US Dept of Ed and an additional \$1.5M private donation to enhance and support teaching profession in AK

University Outreach and College & Career Bridging Programs: A 266-program-analysis with special focus on: 1) college readiness, 2) school district partnerships and 3) youth outreach and information

The Alternative Certification Programs for those already holding a degree, and who would like to become teachers, especially in rural AK

And finally, from a research perspective, a core feature of the UA mission: U of A's efforts to attract, train and retain qualified teachers will be enhanced by acting on the 2010 U of A Foundation award to establish the Center of Alaska Education Policy Research

[8:24:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON referred to the committee handout titled "University of Alaska" dated February 8, 2012, the page 14 graph titled "Graduates of UA initial teacher preparation programs by ethnicity, 2006-2011," and noted the downward fluctuation of Native teacher graduates. Importance has been placed on training Native teachers who may then return to the Bush to teach, and asked what plans, or program adjustments, are being considered to increase this number.

MR. POWERS responded that significant outreach efforts are expended to attract and develop Native teachers. Strides have been made through CAEPR (Center for AK Education Policy Research), the Chevak initiative, and the alternative certification option, which have made an appreciable difference.

[8:27:02 AM](#)

RICHARD CAULFIELD, Provost & Executive Dean, Career Education, University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), said that the three previously named programs are focused on recruitment and retention of Alaska Native teachers. The privately funded

program in Chevak, operating through the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) campus targets paraprofessionals, and, he opined, these Natives are often the best individuals to have as teachers in the Bush. The Future Educators of Alaska program is also an exciting development, as it encourages high school students to enter the teaching profession; with good response. Dual credit classes are being offered in some high schools, which allow students to achieve required high school course work, while earning credits towards a college degree. Thus, diligent efforts are being made on the various UA campus sites.

[8:29:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON requested elaboration on the program offered in Chevak.

MR. POWERS deferred.

DIANE HIRSHBERG, Associate Professor of Education Policy, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA), responded that the program has just passed the one year mark, it has 15 participants of mixed ethnicity, and as yet no one has completed the program. The program is being used as a model and expectations are that it will be expanded to other districts. She offered to provide further information to the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested that it would be good to have a report included in the summary, in future presentations.

MR. CAUFIELD interjected that other programs are also reaching out to Native educator prospects, which include: renewal of the PITAAS (Preparing Indigenous Teachers & Administrators for Alaska Schools) grant; and the Village Educator program, a new grant with 20 teachers enrolled who expect to receive a reading certification.

[8:31:39 AM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS reviewed the number of teacher graduates [page 4 graph], and the distribution of the new teachers. The summary indicates that roughly half take a position right away, and he asked for an accounting of the placement statistics.

MS. HIRSHBERG said tracking graduates is a collaborative effort and follow-up is beginning to occur. One contributing factor is whether the new teacher chooses to remain in a city hub rather

than a rural community. The need is for rural teachers, and if the choice is made to remain in an urban setting, a new graduate will find placement difficult. A glut of specialty teachers may occur in a particular subject area, while a need goes unmet in a related field; biology versus physics/chemistry. Finally, with a tight job market in the Lower 48, fewer turnovers occur in Alaska, and a new graduate may not find a position. Research is being undertaken to delve into tracking the graduates and gather data regarding the outcome of the teacher program participants.

SENATOR THOMAS maintained that the numbers are discouraging and suggested that a counseling aspect could prove worthwhile to help teacher candidates understand the criteria and parameters of the teaching training choices.

[8:35:47 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK recalled that hiring Native teachers has been an ongoing issue for decades. He recounted a personal experience and said that teaching in the Bush can be a non-gratifying experience. Perhaps, he suggested, meaningful comments could be solicited from Native teachers who were trained and are leaving the profession, including his daughter who has taught for 12 years and is now ending her career. A major difficulty is the time spent by teachers on classroom management and motivation, perhaps 80 percent, and only 20 percent of the time on actual instruction. Referring to a pamphlet available to the committee, titled "Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsible Schools," published by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, University of Alaska Fairbanks, adopted by the Assembly of Alaska Native Educators, February 3, 1998, reprinted in 2010, he pointed out that the booklet has existed for fourteen years, and may contain many answers being asked today. The Alaska State Seal does not carry a single, token representation of the Native people, and he opined that there is a price paid when Native concerns are not incorporated into the educational system. He then highlighted the following Alaska State Standard for education, which read:

Comparing contrasting cultural events, ideas, settings, and influences, in one story of text across other similar story of text in other cultures. Example, Puritanism, immigration, and Harlem renaissance.

CHAIR DICK said that although the premise of the aforementioned standard sounds good, the example lacks reference to the Alaskan

Native people. He then referred to another standard, which read:

Determining the meaning of words in context including connotation and denotation; use of precise or technical vocabulary content specific vocabulary, like symbiosis, suffrage, and apartheid, or multiple meanings. Example: The James Joyce character Stephen Daedalus is a character and a reference to a Greek mythological figure.

CHAIR DICK named a number of Native Alaskan mythological characters and suggested that using them as example characters rather than using Greek examples would be helpful for engagement with Native students. He challenged the regent to take such a tack, and alter the SEE SPOT RUN [DICK AND JANE series] education of 2012.

MR. POWERS said the report contains seven comments, and about half relate to sensitivity to Native education, but the points are well taken.

CO-CHAIR MEYER commented on Representative Dick's experience and knowledge of education in rural Alaska, and urged the regents to seek him out as a resource.

[8:42:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA indicated the need to see the indigenous people as a resource and primary wealth of the state. She asked how the research that is being collected about rural Alaska is being applied to the curricula, particularly in science and mathematics.

MR. POWERS maintained that attention on tapping local community knowledge is occurring and said that follow-up will be reported in 2013. For a response to the science and mathematics question, he deferred.

MS. HIRSHBERG said efforts are on-going, and funding is one of the problems. Two websites, Alaskool and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, provide comprehensive information for traditional knowledge and how it is integrated with western knowledge. Unfortunately neither has funding at this time, but a few volunteers are still active. Reformatting original material to allow it to be used with today's devices cannot be done without financial support; thus, much of the Native

language material is not accessible. Some Native not for profit organizations have been helpful, in this regard. She listed a number of current projects and said "things are percolating." Given the current resources there is not enough in the budget to fund the faculty necessary to carry out this work.

8:48:36 AM

SENATOR DAVIS commented on the importance of the regent report, and said that it is not necessary to wait for a full year to address the legislature again; time will be made for other meetings. The six year graduation rate needs to be addressed, as well as course transferability, which are both important points to consider. The students, who visit the capitol during session, comment on aspects that are important, such as having to spend 10-12 hours in remedial courses; it isn't getting any better. Finally, she asked for information regarding a K-20 program.

MR. CAUFIELD said the level of cooperation and collaboration is exceptional within the three primary units of the UA systems. Credit transferability is important, although not yet problem free. Eliminating this issue is a goal, and streamlining is in the works, he said.

8:53:15 AM

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE agreed with the previous statement regarding the hiring statistics of the graduates. He stressed the need to track the graduates and provide more useful information. He suggested more attention be given to where hiring needs exist in order to steer students into those areas.

MS. HIRSHBERG indicated that data exists on teachers who have graduated and entered the teaching realm. Information on those who do not begin teaching in Alaskan schools, is an area that requires further attention. Further, students may be solid in their intent to teach in an urban area, and it would be difficult for these graduates to find a position. The teacher openings are not necessarily available in the desired locales or subjects.

MR. CAUFIELD indicated that certain districts look to the UA system for graduates for new hires, Fairbanks indicates 48 percent, for Juneau it's 40 percent. The interest may have to do with the relationship that has formed between the university

and the districts, which can be further cultivated to increase percentages across the state.

[8:59:45 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH referred to the committee handout and the chart on page 13, regarding the percentage of teachers working in Alaskan districts. Fairbanks borough leads the state with 48 percent of new hires being local products. He asked what would lead Fairbanks to have such a high retention rate. Further, he asked whether this has had a beneficial effect or not; are the students receiving a quality education with these teachers.

MR. POWERS suggested that local hires are easier to retain.

MS. HIRSHBERG agreed that outside teachers may bring different perspectives; however, to stem the turnover rate in rural Alaska, being from the area is vital. In some villages, unless you are Native, you may not be able to purchase a home or property; making it difficult for an outsider to remain for long. The learning curve for the cultural differences is an obstacle for many new teachers, if they are not from the area. Students must have an educational opportunity that prepares them to choose between an economic and subsistence lifestyle. A number of years have passed since there has been a systematic assessment of the difference comparing the effectiveness of local teacher graduates and outside hires. At one time, an independent source was used to observe and assess the teachers comparatively, and the UAA graduates scored highly, being well versed in the standards for the state. However, she said a diversity of teachers, bringing a variety of perspectives can be helpful to students.

SENATOR FRENCH suggested that means be devised to attach a dollar value to an Alaskan trained teacher, as it may prove helpful.

[9:05:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER adjourned the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees was adjourned at 9:06 a.m.