

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

February 8, 2012  
9:12 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Scott Kawasaki

**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**

TODD POAGE, Superintendent  
Alaska Gateway School District  
Tok, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a school-produced video presentation of the Alaskan Gateway School District.

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 discussion with 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 discussion with the UA Board of Regents.

DEBORAH LO, Dean  
School of Education  
University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the discussion with the UA Board of Regents.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the discussion with the UA Board of Regents.

PAT GAMBLE, President  
Statewide Programs & Services  
University of Alaska (UA)  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the discussion with the UA Board of Regents.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:12:13 AM](#)

**CHAIR ALAN DICK** called the House Education Standing Committee to order at 9:12 a.m. Representatives Dick, Feige, P. Wilson, Pruitt, Seaton, and Cissna were present at the call to order.

### **Superintendent Presentation: Alaska Gateway School District**

CHAIR DICK announced that the next order of business would be a presentation from the Alaska Gateway School District.

The committee took an at-ease from 9:12 a.m. to 9:13 a.m.

[9:13:19 AM](#)

TODD POAGE, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, introduced a school produced video, named the grants that provided funding, and made three guarantees: no awards will be won by the film; everyone involved now knows more about iFilm than they did prior to the production; and, he assured, it is more interesting than the power point that he could have presented. He then began the 10 minute video.

[9:25:31 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK commented that it was a fine presentation, and encouraged other superintendent's to follow suit.

[9:25:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked about road expansion in the area.

MR. POAGE responded that every school is now on the road system, but the road to Eagle is closed during the winter months. He said some teachers live in Tok but commute daily over the rough and difficult 30 mile road to Teslin.

#### **Board of Regents - University of Alaska**

CHAIR DICK announced that the final order of business would be a continuation of the discussion regarding the presentation from the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska.

[9:28:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON referred to the committee handout titled "University of Alaska" dated February 8, 2012, page 3, noted that there are only 200 participants in the five year program, and asked if the number reflects the interest level, or are there limitations due to the course offerings.

[9:29:32 AM](#)

DIANE HIRSHBERG, Associate Professor of Education Policy, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA), explained that the statistic reflects the interested applicants.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON inquired whether it was due to classes not being offered, or overfilled.

MS. HIRSHBERG replied no, but passing the teaching practices requirement may present a barrier. She elaborated that it is difficult to know if the requirement is a barrier, as some students take the Teaching Practices I, prior to submitting a formal application for the program.

[9:31:27 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK interjected that changes have occurred in the university system, including availability of on-line courses and stressed the importance of keeping the legislature informed of the changing landscape. The efforts of the legislature to take appropriate action intended to help support students endeavoring to attend university relies on current information in order, he said, "to send kids to where you're [UA] going, and not where you were."

[9:32:55 AM](#)

RICHARD CAULFIELD, Provost & Executive Dean, Career Education, University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), said the statistics requested by the committee, regarding the persistence of students in the programs can be provided. One program area that has reached capacity is special education. He pointed out that the SB 241 report indicates how the funding in recent years resulted in significant increases in the number of graduates from the special education program. Current to this legislature, is a request from UAS for funding which establishes a position for an elementary education faculty member with a focus on literacy.

[9:33:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that there is a constraint on teachers entering the elementary education program, at the UAS campus, and asked if that the requested literacy position would help to alleviate the bottleneck.

MR. CAUFIELD replied yes.

[9:34:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON commented that many of today's questions are similar to the questions that have been asked every year, during her 12-year tenure in the legislature. One question that she has carried, which has a response pending, is whether teacher training courses are taught using the same

principles that were instituted 20 years ago, or have new research discoveries been integrated. The recent social/emotional and developmental information, and teaching techniques derived from the related research, would be important for teacher trainees to be abreast, as part of their syllabus, she opined, and reminded the regents that Alaska leads the nation in suicide and other social ills.

MR. CAUFIELD deferred.

[9:37:44 AM](#)

DEBORAH LO, Dean, School of Education, University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), said absolutely. The faculty is provided opportunities to attend training sessions, as well as monitor other venues to stay abreast of the latest information and techniques, which can then be incorporated into the teacher training classes. The university has alignment grids with the national and state standards, which are reviewed on an ongoing basis. She assured that the class syllabi are based on current techniques and developments occurring in the field of teaching.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested that the annual regents report include follow-up responses to questions that were asked the previous year; such as what information is brought to teacher in-services, and other on-going educational opportunities for the state educators.

MS. LO said that the cycle of research is also being implemented, which helps teachers self-assess and improve, to wit: problem solve, consider a solution, implement, reflect, review data, repeat, and make determinations on the outcomes.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON queried whether the special education, mathematics, and science teacher training classes are full, and if not, why staff would be needed for the elementary teacher training program, which would only add to the plethora of class teachers.

MS. LO responded that it is framed as an elementary position; however, it is actually a literacy specialist who will reach across the content areas. Currently there is not a dedicated literacy staff person. She said that there is a reading faculty but that person primarily does graduate work. It is important to have someone with training and background in literacy, as reading is 75 percent of the game.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON stressed the importance of having the teacher training program completed in a concise four years. She said that it has been reported that required classes are not always offered, hence the need to continue for another year or two, in order to complete a degree.

MS. LO ascertained that the current special education program is a 120 hour course; an absolute four year program.

9:44:03 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON recalled that the Higher Education Task Force, as well as this committee, identified that one of the most effective tools for helping students complete a program of study was to have individualized advisor advocates. One of the requirements for an institution accepting the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) is that an advisor advocate be provided for every student. He asked whether the university affords this type of assistance to navigate the system and provide support to complete a course of study, and stressed the need to have this help available, and integrated, in every branch of the teacher certification programs.

MR. CAUFIELD responded that every campus has mandatory, or intrusive, counseling.

9:46:18 AM

CHAIR DICK research continues to be lacking around what works best for Native Alaskan students, as statistics are based on studies from the Lower 48. There are six focus points for ISER, and he asked for them to be reiterated. Further, he recalled that a telephone conference recently considered changing the paradigm, which stirred interest at the time.

MICHAEL POWERS, Chair, Academic & Student Affairs Committee Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA), directed attention to the committee handout, page 19, and paraphrased from the report, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The CAEPR Advisory Board met in October 2011, and set the following priorities for research in the coming year. The board determined that CAEPR should identify successful models and identify why they are successful and how they can be implemented accordingly:

Identify successful learning readiness models, explore why they are successful and what might be implemented accordingly

Explore models for systemic change in education, in order to better serve all students, especially culturally and socially unique students who are at risk

Identify successful models for preparing Alaska Native teachers, administrator and superintendents, explore why they are successful and what might be implemented accordingly

Identify successful educator and administrator retention models, explore why they are successful and what might be implemented accordingly

Identify indigenous language models that lead to successful learning

[9:49:07 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK asked for elaboration on the audio conference, which he previously mentioned, and the possibility of shifting the paradigm.

MS. HIRSHBERG recalled the audio conference and indicated that it was what spawned the objectives for CAEPR, as read by Regent Powers. Originally discussion formed around ways to identify at risk students and provide them better service. The idea was to identify methods entirely different from the status quo; however acting on the information is a struggle. Currently a number of people are interested in engaging in the effort, and some may be able to work with Education Northwest, which has a regional education laboratory. Additionally, the Alaska Statewide Policy Research Alliance, will partner with EED, CAEPR, and legislators, to ascertain the ways and means to facilitate a systemic change. A sub-group has been formed to address the multi-faceted question and to study how other indigenous students have been met, on a global scale, including those of Hawaii, Greenland, and New Zealand. Other questions remain regarding the challenges of bringing new ideas into the existing educational structure.

[9:51:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked whether the proposed educational policy research will be focused on K-12 or university level students.

MS. HIRSHBERG said that the advisory board has posed a number of broad questions, but specific funding does not exist to support the effort. A validity study is being launched statewide to assess the new core standards and determine whether a student who completes the standards can actually be deemed college and career ready. She named several other endeavors that ISER is undertaking, and said funding is being sought in order to hire more people to help with these studies. Finally, collaborating across the three UA campuses, and with other organizations is also important, in order to embrace expertise that exists outside of the ISER center in Fairbanks.

[9:54:25 AM](#)

PAT GAMBLE, President, Statewide Programs & Services, University of Alaska (UA), said progress may be slow, and it may seem at times as though the tires are bogged down, spinning in the mud and prohibiting forward motion, but he assured, there is a lot of energy in the motor trying to move through the transmission and turn the wheels to make incremental progress. A systemic issue exists, which makes ISER valuable. However, in the FY 13 budget, all funding for ISER was unfortunately zeroed out, as were all the funds indicated for advising. He said the intention was to begin a system wide advisory program, as identified and requested from the task force, but without funding 35,000 students will not receive the planned support. A data base needs to be constructed on each of these students to answer a myriad of individual questions. Additionally, needed assistance for devising a pathway through the university matrix, which every student is faced with in order to graduate in a four year period, will be minimally met. The road to graduation is a minefield full of administrative and bureaucratic obstacles. It is well known that transferring credits can be a problem, and the university has undertaken a Strategic Direction Initiative (SDI) to discover what is actually occurring versus what the administration expects is happening; a shift of focus from input to output measurements. The budget has flattened, in the last couple of years, and what is left must be applied to the absolute necessities. One of these critical areas is SDI advising for students, particularly in the first two years of study. The advising thrust is to assist students to a timely graduation, via the SDI approach and the academic advising what is in place. The SDI advisors will understand the labor needs

of the state, in order to appropriately direct students to study majors that are in demand in the job market. He pointed out that the base pay for a teacher is an issue and represents a disincentive for anyone considering the vocation as it is not competitive with other professions. Mr. Gamble reported that some universities in the Lower 48 have had major budget cuts in the past few years. The survival mode has caused many to take a number of innovative steps and approaches that UA has only had to consider. The data is being monitored to grasp how well these ideas are serving the campuses involved, which will provide valuable information for the administrators. Advising is clearly emerging as one of the pre-eminent initiatives, especially with the variety of study choices now available; students require advice to identify appropriate approaches. Other critical action includes e-learning options and combining e-learning in the regular classroom. The SDI is designed to compile information from sources such as informative publications, staff and faculty input from out-reach meetings, and student comments, as well as to consider what the hassle factor is for a student in the system to remove hurdles for students. Administrators are reviewing the impact and effect of the three year window from senior high school through the first two years of college. Motivation and assistance in the senior year of high school is a critical point to cultivate interest and support in order for a student to successfully transition into college. He agreed that the key for Native Alaskan students, particularly in Bush areas, is a relevant curriculum. Reports indicate that these students appear to lose interest at about the eighth grade, and he opined that the standard, traditionally taught curriculum, is not appropriate to keep these students stimulated and learning. Incorporating the math, physics, and science of familiar bird flight patterns or boats on the myriad of river systems, could prove more meaningful than solving the age old problem of two trains leaving the station at the same time; especially for students who may have never seen a train. The same math and science concepts need to be taught, through a curriculum based on a meaningful and practical context. He relayed:

As [an associate from Alaska Pacific University] ... said: I bring kids in from the outside, give them 2 years and give them a Master's degree, for the same thing that a thirteen year old coming out of the Bush already knows, that he learned from his brothers and sisters, and aunties, and mom and dad. So relevant curriculum, I think, is going to be very, very important.

MR. GAMBLE finished, stating that going through the wickets required to effect this type of change and have it reflected in the teacher training courses represents a big bold step; however, taking that step, and not being afraid of it, could make a huge difference.

[10:07:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT agreed on the importance of counseling. He described his straight forward experience, as a graduate of the UA system receiving minimal counseling assistance, and the contrasting, difficult journey that his wife experienced. Today's students have an even more complicated system to navigate. The recent change in the catalogue has caused problems for students, and said administrators need to be aware of how such upgrades affect applicants.

[10:10:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that advisor funds have been eliminated, but the task force identified it as a primary need. He asked where, in the process, the funding was cut and how the legislature might ensure that it is retained in the future budget.

MR. GAMBLE said the legislative intent and the support through the process appeared to be solid, and it remains a mystery to the university how it was zeroed out. The university will submit a very tight budget in 2013.

[10:14:23 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK thanked the regents and announced the next committee meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.