

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

January 30, 2013

3:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Vice Chair
Senator Berta Gardner

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Lynn Gattis, Chair
Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Charlie Huggins

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

PATRICK GAMBLE, President
University of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation on the state of the University of Alaska.

DR. HERB (ILISAURRI) SCHROEDER, Vice Provost and Founder
Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program
University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Addressed the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:05:13 PM](#)

CHAIR LYNN GATTIS called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 3:05 p.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Drummond, Reinbold, Seaton, Wilson and Chair Gattis. Senators present were Gardner, Vice Chair Dunleavy and Chair Stevens.

Presentation: The State of the University of Alaska

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PATRICK GAMBLE, President, University of Anchorage, explained that the presentation today would be a general discussion. He said the university has already briefed both the Senate and House Finance Committees regarding its budget.

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MR. GAMBLE stated that two-and-half years ago, as a new president he took a look at what the previous president was not able to get to. He said that he took about six months to visit the campuses and get to know people. He related that he was involved with secondary and higher education in his previous work with the Air Force.

He reported that he found the university to be an organization similar to the business world with a 2009 strategic plan that needed updating.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS announced the arrival of Representative Saddler.

MR. GAMBLE explained that he soon discovered that the university system needed to take an introspective look at itself and ask the question if what it was doing was relevant to today and examine the reasons for doing what it has been doing.

MR. GAMBLE said he had the opportunity to sit on the University Task Force and listen to concerns about secondary and post-secondary education and the link between the two. He came to the conclusion that the university had to get involved with higher education at a strategic level in the state. He said the band-aid approach would not work for large systematic changes.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX joined the meeting.

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MR. GAMBLE explained his appointment of Dr. Terry MacTaggart and the need for the university to change direction. The new plan was named the Strategic Direction Initiative (SDI). The goal of SDI is that SDI is no longer needed. He said that the university is two-thirds through the SDI project. The second phase consisted of a team that looked at all the current reviews that had been done on the university system and included Rasmussen Foundation funding. There were over 80 write-ups, recommendations, and suggestions, including the MacTaggart Rogers report on university staff. Over 80 listening sessions were held throughout Alaska with students, faculty, and alumni to collect feedback about what the university was doing right, and wrong.

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He explained that after all the data was collected, a technical word and subject search was run to distill subject material into five major themes. He said at that point SDI was a year-and-a-half into the effort. He noted the transfer of credits was one of the themes. He described some of the problems within the three independent units of the university due to fast growth and its impacts.

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He stated that the good news is, after a year-and-a-half, the university has made amazing progress. The organization understands the process and has worked it very well. There has been cooperation, on the academic side, of faculty across the system by using the governance process. Another plus is the fact

that over the last four years, major universities in the Lower 48 have taken huge budget cuts, which has forced them to try innovated things in order to survive. He used the California system as an example of a system that was forced to change and become a better system.

He said that Alaska's university system has not had huge budget cuts and is able to make changes on a programmatic basis with the cooperation of the legislature, using the best ideas from colleges down south.

He noted the importance of determining Alaska's identity as a university. He gave an example of an Eastern private college's curriculum versus an engineering university's curriculum to show the variety of college identities.

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He said the university system is "Alaska's university for Alaska's needs." It is workforce development oriented, as well as higher degree oriented. Alaska's students are interested in staying in Alaska and working on what drives Alaska - the economy and way of life. He pointed out that continuous improvement is the desire of any business or institution.

He related that phase three of SDI deals with the desired effect of the university system, such as better relationships with high schools. In this phase, the five themes are analyzed in terms of the desired effect.

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He stated that on February 20, 2013, there will be a very large meeting of university system leadership to finish phase two of SDI and begin phase three, which may be the hardest part of all. He said that SDI could not be done without the cooperation of the three chancellors. He praised the current team and said the probability of success is very high.

CHAIR STEVENS voiced appreciation for the presentation. He asked when the MacTaggart Report would be published.

MR. GAMBLE answered that the MacTaggart Report was completed prior to his arrival at the university. It covered only the system-wide staff.

CHAIR STEVENS inquired if there would be a further working of that report.

MR. GAMBLE explained that Dr. MacTaggart is working as a consultant on the university's behalf. Notes from the meetings are available, but there will not be another report.

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CHAIR STEVENS noted that he had read the MacTaggart Report and it was very interesting. He highlighted the Alaska Native Science Education Program (ANSEP), saying it works well.

MR. GAMBLE explained that his interest in the ANSEP program is analyzing what makes the program work and seeing if those qualities can be expanded to other programs and to high schools to keep students motivated. He spoke of the difficulties with remediation programs and the successes of ANSEP, which is directed by Dr. Herb Schroeder.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked about the graduation rate of the ANSEP program.

DR. HERB (ILISAURRI) SCHROEDER, Founder and Executive Director, Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program, replied that it was 72 percent.

MR. GAMBLE clarified that it was 72 percent, compared to about a 30 percent graduation rate of all students attempting to get a certificate or degree.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked what it would take to expand ANSEP to the public school system.

MR. GAMBLE answered that Dr. Schroeder has validated ANSEP's methodology in places other than Alaska. Those attributes appear to be universal with all students. He stressed the importance of motivation within the classroom with the use of the integration of up-to-date technology. He said the secret to expanding the program is to get students interested when they are young, get them involved, and let them see the excitement of on-line curriculum.

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SENATOR GARDNER questioned why remediation classes for the Merit Scholarship Program were down.

MR. GAMBLE explained that it is a fairly new program with standards built into it. He said it is a three-tiered system and the top tier is doing fine. The lowest tier is in jeopardy and

is participating in remediation classes. He suggested the program may need to be adjusted and one of the solutions is to work in partnership with the high schools.

MR. GAMBLE pointed out that there is also the University of Alaska (UA) Scholars Program for which the top 10 percent of any high school are eligible. The success rate of that program varies, also.

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REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD thanked Mr. Gamble for his factual information and honesty, and for addressing problems brought to him. She voiced concerns about implementing technology without parameters. She asked if there is an outcome based study that shows using technology improves educational outcomes.

MR. GAMBLE offered to find information about that subject. He noted the rapid rate at which technology is finding its way into the hands of students, universities, and colleges. He spoke of the difficulty of funding technology upgrades and keeping up with technological classrooms.

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SENATOR DUNLEAVY suggested having Dr. Schroeder present his model to the committee at a future date. He emphasized that the right program will succeed with all students. He described the difference between "developmental" and "remediation."

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked about the higher education task force and the two items that were highlighted - individual progress and completion rates. The individual required an advisor/advocate for any institution taking the performance scholarship. He understood that the university has been adding advisor positions so that degree-seeking students would have them available. He requested an update on that issue. He also spoke of remediation issues and wanted to know if the university was integrating suggestions made in that area.

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MR. GAMBLE answered that both topics are main themes of SDI. He noted the increase in funding of \$1.1 million for advisory positions. He used University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) as an example of a test application called MAP-Works that was specifically designed to help advisors with a heavy student load know about the students they were advising. He said he was impressed by its potential. He noted that, today, over 5,000 students are involved in MAP-Works. The freshmen and sophomores

have first priority at UAA. The university is beginning to see benefits from the application, such as Early Alert, which helps in retention of students.

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MR. GAMBLE addressed Representative Seaton's second issue of remediation. He said the university now uses "Accuplacer" as a mandated placement tool. They ran into the problem of "cut scores" being different depending on the school. Recently, the faculty aligned cut scores across the university system.

He pointed out that accreditation is the blanket that falls over all issues. It is important that the faculty is the one responsible to make everything work. They are currently looking at the standardization of certain general education requirement courses.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked if the university offers remediation course variability. He explained how discouraged students get if they are placed in the wrong courses.

MR. GAMBLE replied that the university has not progressed that far. The effort to include appropriate course remediation is just beginning within SDI. The recognition of the problem has been noted. He shared an example of a principal at a Kodiak high school who told a story about a student who missed the cut-off on "Accuplacer" by one point. The student's math teacher said the student was one of the best math students in his class, could do college work, and did not need remediation.

He explained the current remediation process and classes offered. He suggested the process should be adapted to serve the students.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked what it would take to implement an ANSEP-type program in the Anchorage public schools or in any district.

MR. GAMBLE explained that one of the biggest problems with bridging programs such as ANSEP is the need for small classes. Such programs are not as effective with large classes. He said he believed the fundamental successful features of ANSEP could be adapted to larger groups. He suggested building a program and "costing it out" for thousands of students in districts across

Alaska. He noted that programs similar to ANSEP have worked in other places such as Hawaii and the Southwest.

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REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked how "costing it out" could be done.

MR. GAMBLE answered that it could be done internally and with the help of a consultant.

SENATOR GARDNER asked about the transferability of credits. She called it a "hot button issue." She thought it was because the public thinks of the university as one university with a bunch of campuses; however, accreditation is a separate subject and there are really three different accredited universities, in that sense. She recalled that the university's response to the problem in the past has been "we're working on that." She asked when the problem will really be resolved.

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MR. GAMBLE said he would know when the university does not have any complaints for a year. He noted that 97 percent of credits did transfer, but the question is, "How did they transfer?" For example, on-line processes sometimes did not work. He stressed that the glitches have to be removed, and in order to do so, there must be system-wide cooperation. He said that, sometimes, it is student error and he gave an example. He suggested that solutions to the problems are moving quickly along.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON spoke of a statewide initiative called the \$10,000 Degree. He asked if the university had looked at streamlined programs such as that.

MR. GAMBLE said no. He explained the idea behind that program is to take as many college credits as possible during high school, take summer school courses, and plan a degree program carefully in order to only spend \$10,000 on tuition. He did say the university is trying to offer more college credits to high school students.

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REPRESENTATIVE WILSON commended Mr. Gamble for working on the problem of transfer of credits. She said the first year she was

a legislator, thirteen years ago, transfer of credits was a problem.

MR. GAMBLE replied that a professor from the university was listening and would relate this information back to the academic world.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD noted that problems with transfer of credits from outside of Alaska lead to lost opportunities for enrollment and revenues. She asked if the university has an on-line model such as the University of Montana's that shows which credits will transfer.

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MR. GAMBLE agreed that transfer of credits earned outside of Alaska is a bigger problem. He related that colleges in the Lower 48 are forming coalitions in order to compare basic courses and avoid transfer problems and meet accreditation standards. Students who transfer from military colleges have fewer problems because the Department of Defense has already made arrangements with colleges, including the UA system, regarding the acceptance of credits.

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CHAIR STEVENS said he appreciates the progress the university has made on transferability, but noted that not all credits are transferable.

SENATOR GARDNER shared a transfer experience in the California system.

MR. GAMBLE agreed that California was doing some cutting edge things as a response to budget cuts. He believed that California colleges pre-approve courses throughout the system. He maintained that the Alaska network should be able to do the same, from courses taken during high school, to a two-year degree, to a main campus or community campus.

SENATOR GARDNER described it as "one university."

CHAIR STEVENS voiced appreciation for the presentation.

MR. GAMBLE stated that he appreciated the committee's interest in the broader topics of education, not just budget issues.

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There being no further business to come before the committee,
Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee
at 4:14 p.m.