

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

February 27, 2013

8:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Vice Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW: REPORT ON TEACHER PREPARATION~ RETENTION~ AND
RECRUITMENT BY THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MICHAEL POWERS, Chair
Academic and Student Affairs Committee
Board of Regents

University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview report on teacher preparation, retention, and recruitment by the University of Alaska's Board of Regents.

DANA THOMAS, Ph.D.; Vice President for Academic Affairs
Member; Board of Regents
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the overview on teacher preparation, retention, and recruitment by the University of Alaska's Board of Regents.

RICK CAUFIELD, Ph.D.; Provost
University of Alaska Southeast
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the overview report on teacher preparation, retention, and recruitment by the University of Alaska's Board of Regents.

ALEXANDRA "LEXI" HILL, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate
Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR)
Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER)
University of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the overview report on teacher preparation, retention, and recruitment by the University of Alaska's Board of Regents.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:11 AM](#)

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the joint meeting of the Senate and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:01 a.m. Present at the call to order from the House Education Standing Committee were Representatives LeDoux, Reinbold, P. Wilson and Gattis. Present from the Senate Education Standing Committee were Senators Stedman, Huggins, Gardner, Dunleavy, and Stevens. Representatives Drummond, Saddler and Seaton arrived as the meeting was in progress.

OVERVIEW: Report on Teacher Preparation, Retention, and Recruitment by the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska

8:01:48 AM

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the only order of business would be an overview Report on Teacher Preparation, Retention, and Recruitment by the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska.

8:02:11 AM

MICHAEL POWERS, Chair; Academic and Student Affairs Committee, Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA), stated he serves as Chair of the UA Board of Regent's Academic and Student Affairs Committee. He provided a brief background including that is a 27-year resident of Fairbanks and his three children have extensively used the university's facilities and programs at the UA Anchorage (UAA) and UA Fairbanks (UAF). He recognized staff present at the hearing, including Patricia Jacobson, Kodiak; Chair, Board of Regents; Pat Gamble, President, UA; Professor Diane Hirshberg, Director, Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR), Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER); and Alexandra (Lexi) Hill, (via teleconference), Senior Research Associate, CAEPR ISER; Dean Deborah Lo, School of Education, University of Alaska, Southeast (UAS); and Allen Morotti, Dean, eLearning and Distance Education, UAF. He understood a number of former educators currently serve on the joint Education committee. He thanked Senator Stevens, who was the sponsor of Senate Bill 241, 25th Alaska State Legislature, and those interested in an open dialogue regarding teacher preparation. He offered his belief that this allows an opportunity for the legislature to identify a strategic direction as it "takes the pulse" on education matters. He suggested that this briefing could provide insights into how to deploy precious resources to education a citizenry. He offered to discuss the biennial report on the university's efforts to attract, train, and retain teachers. He described this as being very important to the Board of Regents and one shared by the current Chair of the Board of Regents, Pat Jacobson. He provided his background, including that he comes from a teaching family. First, both of his parents are teachers and his four siblings began teaching and all have left the ranks except one. This indicates to him that the areas his siblings taught - Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Colorado - are also struggling with similar issues. Second, he is a father, who has actively engaged his own children in UAF programs. Third, as CEO of Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, he noted the hospital's board has worked closely with the UAF to contribute to the nursing effort. This effort has reduced the hospital's vacancy rate from 17 percent to 6 percent. Additionally, he observed that the

engineering profession has been embracing the same type of university-private partnership, which has been so successful. Finally, he has been excited to be part of early discussions with President Gamble, Chair Jacobson, Vice President Thomas, and the chancellors at each campus to bring the same sense of urgency and enthusiasm to the teaching world.

8:08:03 AM

DANA THOMAS, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs; Member, Board of Regents, University of Alaska, said he was born and raised in Fairbanks and has experienced a long history of working with the schools since joining the university. He briefly touched on the university's role in teacher education, recruitment and retention. He referred to a handout in members' packets entitled, "UA's Role in Teacher Education, Recruitment and Retention." This graphic depicts the UA's role in teacher education, retention, and recruitment, which covers a broad range, including future education programs in middle school and high school, teacher education programs at the university, and for Alaska teacher placement, a unit to help identify teachers in the state and the Lower 48. Additionally, the graphic covers teacher mentorship programs, including urban and rural areas, continuing education, including master's degrees or certificates in specialized areas, such as reading specialist and cross-cultural education. Across the spectrum, research is conducted by education faculty, research organizations, as well as K-12 outreach groups. He discussed teacher recruitment. He explained that Alaska school districts recruit within Alaska and at job fairs across the nation both in collaboration with the UA placement unit as well as on their own. Some research results show that teachers prepared in Alaska are more likely to stay in the state, especially in rural areas; however, rural areas report recruiting only a small fraction of their teacher needs from Alaska's teacher education programs.

8:11:40 AM

DR. THOMAS referred to a table on the left of the handout. He reviewed the statistics of the past three years, noting school districts have hired about 1,100 teachers, of which about half have been experienced teachers already in Alaska. Approximately 140 teachers changed school districts from the previous year and 220 previously taught in Alaska public schools, but had taken one or more years off from teaching. Additionally, 140 teachers were experienced teachers already in Alaska who had not previously taught in Alaska. He reported that school districts

hired about 210 new Alaskan teachers, both Alaska-prepared teachers as well as Alaskans who obtained schooling in the Lower 48 and returned to Alaska. He further reported that 40 percent of them were Alaska residents and 60 percent were new teachers hired from the Lower 48. Of those, 370 teachers already had experience in the classroom. In 2012, 23 percent of new hires by urban school districts were teachers from the Lower 48, but 70 percent of new hires for rural school districts were hired from the Lower 48. He recapped that teachers looking for jobs in urban districts have difficulty finding them due to competition and the number of teacher available, but rural school districts must look out-of-state for teacher hires.

[8:13:36 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS recounted that he often hears from people who have worked as volunteers or teacher aides in rural areas. He asked whether UA is cultivating aides as teachers. He stated that the legislature encourages cultivating people who would make good teachers to volunteer or work as classroom aides and eventually to obtain their teaching certificates. He asked whether that is a program being pursued.

DR. THOMAS answered yes. Each of the UA's campuses has active programs to grow these people into teachers. He offered that the best known program is the Chevak teacher preparation initiative or the [Alaska Native Teacher Initiative (ANTI)] that UAA offers. The UAA partnered with a group of paraprofessionals who have been teaching in the classroom in the [Kashunamiut School District in Chevak] who have been asked participate in a program to become teachers or to raise their education credential levels.

CHAIR STEVENS commented he was glad to hear this.

[8:15:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked how many educators graduate per year from the UA. She said she is alarmed by the number of out-of-state teachers being recruited.

DR. THOMAS responded about 200 teachers graduate annually. One of the challenges has been the high numbers of graduates - about 150 of the 200 graduates - who are elementary teacher graduates. Thus, the UA is overproducing elementary teachers and und under producing secondary teachers, especially in math and science.

He acknowledged one challenge has been to recruit teachers into these specific fields.

CHAIR STEVENS asked whether by "over producing" that he meant the UA graduates more teachers specialized in lower grades, in terms of the number of elementary education teacher jobs available.

DR. THOMAS answered the UA graduates significant numbers of elementary education teachers. These graduates usually want to work where they currently live, termed "place bound", so they tend not to take the jobs in rural Alaska. Of the ninety percent of graduates apply for teaching jobs in the state, only 20 percent of them apply to work in rural Alaska.

[8:17:10 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked whether technology is being used in rural areas to assist the place-bound residents who want to become teachers, such as using on-line courses.

DR. THOMAS answered that nearly all of the UA programs are offered via distance learning.

[8:18:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX wondered whether one issue that affects teacher retention in rural areas is that housing in many rural communities is only available during the school year. Thus teachers need to pack up and leave every summer since housing is very limited.

DR. THOMAS responded that lack of housing is one of the factors.

[8:19:15 AM](#)

DR. THOMAS said each of the UA institutions has made special efforts to recruit and grow Alaska Native and rural teachers to specifically meet the needs of rural areas. He reported on each campus's efforts, including the UAS program, "Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaskan Schools (PITAAS)," which had 11 graduates in 2012. The UAF partners with the Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI) program to recruit rural students into teaching. Additionally, the UAF held a grant-funded Alaska Native teacher preparation program, which resulted in 18 teachers' certifications, with 17 of its 18 graduates now teaching in Alaska. He related that the Chevak

Alaska Native Teacher Initiative (ANTI) mentioned earlier offers courses on-line to assist the Bush paraprofessionals, with 12 paraprofessionals currently involved. He reiterated that most of the programs are available via distance or a hybrid distance component to help facilitate access. Another statewide effort, the Future Educators of Alaska (FEA) program, works to inspire and support Alaska Native K-12 students who go into education, which currently encompasses approximately 500 high school and middle school students.

[8:20:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON understood the UA has had difficulty in preparing teachers for a profession in rural Alaska. She further understood the UA has instituted programs to assist in addressing this issue. She offered her belief that some of the classes the prospective teachers are taking may need to be changed because the students going through these programs won't need to take a specialized class. Additionally, she asked whether new teachers are prepared to meet the issues today's students face, such as students with an alcoholic parent in the home. In response to Chair Stevens, she restated her question. She asked whether the professors are changing how they teach and if any of the professors have recent teaching experience in rural classrooms.

[8:24:17 AM](#)

RICK CAUFIELD, Ph.D.; Provost, University of Alaska Southeast, said he is a product of the system, having earned his master's degree and teaching certificate at the UA system about 25 years ago. He recalled during his student teaching days he considered it a victory when middle school students simply showed up for class. He further recalled his wife's experiences as a school counselor, in which students spoke numerous languages and many children came from single parent or troubled homes. He assured the committee that that many UA professors are skilled teachers who have gravitated to the university system after having a career in the classroom. Many professors have rural Alaska teaching experience and continue to travel to Bush Alaska to supervise student teachers. The greatest demand for new teachers is in rural areas, he said. The UA's faculty travels around the state, sleep on gym floors, and provide support to Bush staff. He related the National Council on the Accreditation of Teachers Education (NCATE) has accredited all three UA institutions and subscribes to continuous improvement. The UA has been attuned to the importance of faculty continuing

to provide the best possible education. The UAS's faculty has just begun offering an online course, the Massively Open Online Course (MOOCS), which relates to differential learning styles. In summary, young people learn in different ways and new technology changes the style of learning, so the university must continuously adapt the instruction methods in the classroom to address the changing environments in which teachers work.

[8:27:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked the length of time the university has been conducting site visits.

DR. CAULFIELD recalled that faculty visits have been in place for some time, but the university renewed its efforts at all three campuses in an effort to prepare teachers for teaching in rural communities with diverse cultures.

[8:28:47 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS recalled earlier testimony that 70 percent of rural teachers and 30 percent of urban teachers are hired from out-of-state. He suspected that some of the urban teachers are ones who have relocated from rural Alaska. He asked whether the university tracks the percentage of teachers who relocate.

DR. THOMAS responded about 140 teachers change school districts in any given year.

CHAIR STEVENS commented that even though rural Alaska has significant turnover some of the teachers remain in the state.

[8:30:16 AM](#)

DR. THOMAS, in response to a committee question on reasons why some teachers are not teaching, said that the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (AEPR) conducted a survey of recent graduates and he highlighted the key reasons. First, the biggest single reason was job availability. Some teachers found a lack of jobs were available in the place they wanted to teach. Second, other teachers were not able to relocate due to family reasons, lifestyle, weather, or living conditions. Finally, some teachers decided to further their education.

DR. THOMAS identified one of the university's Strategic Direction Initiative key items is partnerships with schools, which is all about focusing on continuous improvement. First,

the challenge is whether school districts will hire. The Fairbanks North Star Borough canceled its job fair since they expect to layoff teachers. Next, another challenge is whether the teachers' evaluation system based on students' scores will negatively impact a school district's willingness to engage student teachers and if it will affect the education programs. Finally, the challenge is whether more consistent incentives can be developed to address elements such as teaching in rural areas.

[8:33:11 AM](#)

DR. CAULFIELD commented on his and his wife's experiences while student teaching in a small Athabaskan village, Arctic Village, in the Brooks Range. He said their house was the old generator shack for the school, which was used daily by the preschool. When the dentist came to town their home also became the dentist's office. This illustrates some challenges teachers face. However, he looks back fondly on these early experiences.

DR. CAULFIELD addressed the level of collaboration under President Gamble's leadership as being greatly improved. He reported that the university is actively working to streamline the university's programs to ensure that students obtain quality education no matter where in Alaska they live and to ensure that the university's resources are used effectively throughout the state. He recognized Commissioner Hanley's presence today. He spoke to the essential relationship between the university and the Department of Education and Early Development (EED), which he described as being a terrific relationship.

[8:35:50 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER asked whether credits between the institutions are transferable credits. She wondered if the issues have been resolved. She asked whether students can take courses at UAS and when they transfer to another UA campus, such as UAA or UAF, whether the credits will transfer.

DR. CAULFIELD answered that this topic has received significant attention and President Gamble has highlighted transferability of credits as being important. He offered his belief that credits now transfer across the system, especially in the teacher training programs. Issues sometimes arise when a student transfers into the UA system from out of state; however, the university [works with students to the greatest extent possible.]

8:37:09 AM

DR. CAULFIELD stated that all three of the major administrative units at UAA, UAF, and UAS offer teacher preparation programs in a face-to-face format and on-line in an e-learning format, which is basically distance education offered throughout the state. These programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which is one of two federally recognized accreditation bodies for teacher education programs across the country. The NCATE accreditation requires substantial engagement with a variety of community members, school districts, and the EED. Every student must pass a national test to ensure that the quality of subject material being learned falls within expectations. All programs offer initial certification, initial certification in early childhood education, and early childhood special education, which are programs that have been in great demand. Additionally, all three programs offer endorsements and certificates targeted to specific subject areas or disciplines needed by districts, including a reading specialist, cross-cultural education, and special education. He reviewed possible degrees, including a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and Special Education. Students at the graduate level can earn an online Master of Arts degree in Teaching (M.A.T.), a Master of Education degree (M.Ed.), a Special Education Master degree (M.A.T.), as well as receive an Educational Leadership and Principal Certification. Thus over the last 20-30 years the university has experienced a significant increase in on-line offerings.

DR. CAULFIELD remarked that the technology today for on-line learning is very impressive and no longer dependent on a single phone line, as it once was. He acknowledged that service isn't perfect; however, the expansion of the Internet offers high band width in many parts of the state, which allows high-quality on-line learning with two-way interaction, chat rooms, and use of video technology. The university continues to enhance the tools to offer a high-quality education.

DR. CAULFIELD said that in addition to teacher certification, the university also offers continued professional development opportunities for educators in face-to-face and on-line formats, often offered in partnership with the EED. Thus, the university works to continually update its skills. For example, last weekend the Alaska State Technology and Education Conference (ASTECC) was held. He said it's important to the university that

teachers are informed and knowledgeable about the tools and ways these technological tools can be used to affect learning.

DR. CAULFIELD turned to programs that exist across the state which are focused on Alaska Native teachers. To the greatest extent possible, it is advantageous to assist local residents to remain in their villages and become teaching professionals since they have the cultural and language background. Some success has been realized over the years in assisting paraprofessionals in obtaining teaching certificates, but the programs have been expensive. However, with the proliferation of the on-line opportunities and Internet access, the university is better able to provide opportunities. He said, "Would we love to see more Alaska Native teachers; absolutely. And we'd love to continue working with districts to bring those paraprofessionals or others into the teaching profession."

DR. CAULFIELD offered to wrap up. A reference was made earlier to the Alaska Teacher Education Consortium (ATEC), which is a new entity initiated in the fall of 2012 by President Pat Gamble. He said the next conference is scheduled in Juneau for March 26, 2013. Similar to the university's collaboration with the state administration and industry leaders in construction technology and health care, these consortia provide an opportunity to bring together stakeholders, key leaders, and interest groups to create a sounding board and focus on areas for improvement. He reported that the March 26th meeting will bring in superintendents to help the university do a better job in educating, placing, and retaining teachers. Since these superintendents hire the UA graduates they can help identify any areas that need attention or focus, whether it is in math, special education, or reading. In short, the ATEC is a means for the university to "keep our ear to the ground on what we need to be doing to improve our programs."

DR. CAULFIELD then directed attention to the committee members' packets to several graphs, entitled, "FIGURE 1: UA TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES, 2006-2012." He stated this document is also found on pages 11 and 12 in the report in the report entitled, "Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools 2013." He reported that Figure 1 provides graphs that indicate the production of teacher education graduates between 2006 and 2012, while Figure 2 shows the graduation numbers for special education graduates. He emphasized the five-fold increase in the number of special education graduates from 2006-2012. First, this demonstrates that the demand is great for special education. Second, these graphs reflect the type of partnership

necessary by identifying where the needs are so the university can expand program opportunities for students in those areas. For example, at UAS, the university just created a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education. This shows how the university has been able to respond and put people to work to serve communities and children.

[8:47:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how many special education teachers are recruited from the Lower 48.

DR. CAULFIELD deferred to Ms. Lexi Hill to answer.

[8:47:56 AM](#)

ALEXANDRA "LEXI" HILL, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR), University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), said that the percentage is a little higher but not significantly higher than the overall percentage of teachers recruited from the Lower 48.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for further information and also what opportunities the UA system provides for special education teachers with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) credential.

MS. HILL offered to check.

[8:48:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD read a portion of AS 14.40.190 (b), which read: "... to close the gap between known teacher employment vacancies in the state and the number of state residents who complete teacher training." She said it appears the university is on a trend of improvement; however, she found it alarming that school districts still continue to hire nearly 400 teachers from outside of Alaska. She asked for confirmation that the trend to hire within Alaska is improving.

DR. THOMAS responded that hiring Alaskans is absolutely part of the university's agenda and the special efforts being made in rural Alaska speak to that goal. He stated that the university is actively changing the Future Educators of Alaska's (FEAs) process to be more like the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) which has been very successful in

moving students into science and engineering, especially in engineering. Thus, the university has been modeling its education program on processes it finds works best. Some elements are not under the control of the university, such as salary and benefits packages, living conditions, and the cost of energy in rural Alaska. The university does its best to inform people about careers but those challenges remain.

[8:50:47 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER pointed to the national shortage of special education teachers. She asked whether it is more difficult to recruit special education teachers to Alaska. She recalled 100,000 teachers suffered layoffs in California alone.

DR. CAULFIELD offered to research this issue and to provide further information on special education teacher recruitment. However, he noted it is not uncommon for teachers to arrive in the state to fill a rural position and as their career continues to relocate to an urban setting. Interestingly, with Alaska's increase in diversity in urban schools, this brings significant value to the urban schools in terms of language and culture. Additionally, a number of certified teachers who have been in the classroom may choose to continue education and become specialists, such as counselors or special education teachers. In fact, the university works to ensure a clear pathway exists for those teachers who are experienced in the classroom, but who want to specialize as reading specialists or special education.

[8:53:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how popular the Masters of Arts and Teaching (M.A.T.) degree is and whether it is necessary to obtain an advanced degree in order to become a highly-qualified teacher.

DR. THOMAS said many teachers pursue a master's degree since it leads to an increase in salary. In the past decade or two the trends have moved away from the M.A.T. and moved towards obtaining a Master's of Education (M.Ed.).

DR. CAULFIELD elaborated that the M.A.T. students have typically earned a degree elsewhere, and there may be a break between them obtaining a baccalaureate degree [a Bachelor's degree] and teaching. Thus the M.A.T. offers a direct route for those with a college degree to complete their education. This represents an advantage since the candidates typically have some

experiences and are not straight out of college, such as military veterans, who bring maturity to the classroom.

[8:55:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether the university has classes that can help traditional teachers learn to teach today's students, since these students are technology adept. She further asked whether teachers are being incentivized to meet this challenge.

DR. THOMAS answered that teachers learn to use technology more through interaction with each other than in formal classes. He said that creating opportunities to learn technology is typically provided by EED. He recalled the commissioner's 1:1 initiative would create some training centers in cooperation with vendors such as Apple, Inc. and Dell, Inc. However, the vast majority of learning comes from teacher interaction and creating regular opportunities for teachers to share, which is an important aspect.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether the university offers any courses.

DR. THOMAS said a graduate certificate is available in innovative technology. Additionally, most programs require teachers to bring their laptops to class. Thus technology is incorporated to the education programs.

[8:58:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out the new standards being adopted in Alaska and the changing assessments from specific knowledge to integrated analysis. He wondered whether the university is changing teacher preparation so teachers are prepared to teach, with respect to the adoption of the national common core standards. He also wondered if the cross subject integrated analysis is being taught or whether teachers will be unprepared to assess students.

DR. THOMAS responded that the Alaska standards form the basis of the teacher education programs and the programs are revised as needed as core curriculum changes. He said that the university wants teacher graduates to be experts on the Alaska standards, which is fundamental to the educational approach being taken. He said he took part in developing the Alaska standards, in particular, with respect to mathematics. Thus the university is

more broadly engaged in that conversation, even outside the schools of education. Again, the fundamental basis of the teacher preparation programs is a focus on the Alaska standards.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON expressed concern that it focus not just on the standard, but also on what will be measured, which is complex integrated analysis. He suggested that teacher preparation for assessments on integrated analysis for new teachers will arrive at a time when school districts are trying to obtain outcomes from students. He asked whether the university has specifically addressed educating teachers so they understand how to elicit those outcomes from the students to meet the national standards.

MR. POWERS interjected that he has taken notes and will cover teacher training and preparedness with the UA's Academic Affairs Committee.

[9:02:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX, in response to Representative Wilson's earlier concern on older teachers needing to understand the differences in teaching due to technology, remarked that she was unsure of the extent of the issue. However, if it is a significant issue, one solution might be to pair younger teachers with older teachers to foster mentoring and help seasoned teachers better understand the modern culture.

DR. CAULFIELD responded that the university's mentoring program is active, and it produces impressive results. It fosters sharing of knowledge between older, more experienced teachers with new teachers, with the hope of the new teachers being more successful. He shared, anecdotally, that successful teachers are continuous learners. He acknowledged some teachers are ready to retire and should retire. However, in his experience, most teachers are life-long learners and are passionate about teaching. These teachers use their passion to embrace technology, not necessarily in the same way young teachers do, but even so, he did not find this to be a major issue. A teacher in a classroom provides a learning experience for the teachers, but it's a "two-way street" and the teachers are also challenged by their students.

[9:05:06 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS suggested the U.S. is sinking in terms of the global educational community; however, he underscored the terms

"what students learn" and "strategic influence" used today. He offered his belief teachers are responsible for 50 percent of the burden to move the state forward. He recalled that in the mid-1990s, the university lost its accreditation for the teacher training program, which indicated the university fell short of quality standards. He wondered how long that happened before the accreditation was lost. He further recalled the five-year program was instituted, requiring a master's degree, which was when student teaching practice was required. He asked for the pass rate on the practice.

DR. THOMAS was unsure.

SENATOR HUGGINS referred to the university's report and quoted, "Too many of our students don't graduate from high school." The report also indicates that the state's high school graduation rate is in the bottom quarter of the nation. Further, of those who graduate only 33 percent go on to higher education, whereas the nation's average is 50 percent. He recalled some committee members and President Gambell toured the state. He characterized the system as a closed system, in which the university produces the teachers, the teachers produce students that need remedial training. Thus the university bears some of the burden since it produces the teachers. He asked whether the university agreed with his analysis.

DR. THOMAS agreed the university does accept the responsibility, which is why the university is "shining a light on this" and seeks to find improvements.

SENATOR HUGGINS said the single most alarming concern was the number of student in the performance scholarship program that needed remedial training since they represent the top ten percent of students in the state. He wondered how the bottom ten percent was performing, although he said he didn't need an answer. He found it frightening. He encouraged the university to be candid and not skirt the statistics. He pointed out his children went through the school system and did fine. While he did not wish to blame the university, he concluded that everyone bears the burden and responsibility. He looked forward to information on the practice component. He recalled during his service on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) that new teachers were given a pre-test prior to hiring, which was prior to the practice requirement.

[9:11:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON referred to page 19 of the university's report [in members' packets] that identified research projects underway. As part of this effort, the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR), ISER, will conduct a survey this spring. She asked whether the results could be furnished to the committee since it will be beneficial to have this information.

CHAIR STEVENS indicated that CAEPR staff in the audience is nodding in agreement.

9:12:05 AM

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that this is a valuable discussion. He referred to the purpose of Senate Bill 241, which was established to develop a relationship with the UA Board of Regents. He asked to return the focus to the relationship with the Board of Regents. As valuable as this discussion has been, he suggested that the committee needs to hear from the Board of Regents on issues. He asked whether there is more cooperation in the university system's School of Education. After hearing about the changes in course credit transferability between the Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau institutions, it appears that the UA system seems to be combining the three School of Education campuses into a statewide School of Education. He asked whether there is more cooperation between UA campuses and if this is the trend.

MR. POWERS answered the levels of cooperation is remarkable among the institutions and the ease of credit transferability and on-line education provides a seamless and exciting approach.

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that seamless sounds great.

9:15:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked how the advisory advocate program has worked. He pointed out that the legislature mandated individual advisor advocacy was tied to the Alaska Performance Scholarship funds.

MR. POWERS responded that the program has been one of the major keys to success for students at the university. In fact, considerable effort is spent on advising students. He has heard anecdotally in Fairbanks from friends whose children attend UAF and it seems to be working well.

[9:16:22 AM](#)

DR. THOMAS explained that the advisor funding arrived on July 1, 2012. The initial feedback shows that students are completing more credits, which puts them on a more traditional completion path. Additionally, the retention rate of degree-seeking students has increased this spring semester over last fall. The university will continue to track the retention rate and later the attainment rate, which is currently 4-6 years for a baccalaureate degree. He pointed out the attainment rate of 4-6 years is common given the relatively high proportion of part-time students. He urged members to have patience and noted that the advisory role in education, in particular, is making a difference since specific education and rural education advisors help students pursuing an education degree. He characterized the program as being a good investment and the initial evidence shows that it is paying off.

[9:17:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON commended the university's report. She requested the presenter's summary notes.

[9:18:32 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked whether any high school programs exist in Bush high schools to assist those interested in becoming rural teachers and if online or distance courses are available. She further asked whether a student could become a teacher without leaving a village.

DR. THOMAS offered to address one piece. He responded the university's Future Educators of Alaska (FEA) is a collaborative program that actively works primarily with high students on career and education, with nearly 500 students are currently engaged. In part, the program offers dual enrollment course, which allows high school students to receive high school and university credits, including education course work. Additionally, the university is considering adding a second course to the program with the courses available through distance delivery.

[9:20:17 AM](#)

DR. CAULFIELD stated that all three of the UA campuses offer on-line activity for students in their home communities. He said raising the attractiveness in becoming a teacher important to

begin cultivating in the middle school and high school years. The university has also focused on student's math and writing skills. He said the FEA is club-oriented approach and students interact with quality teachers, with the Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI), and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) - for those interested in science and engineering. He pointed out the university program involves peers working together, encouraging each other, honing their knowledge and skills. The university has been working to build on what seems to be working in some areas and have that linked into career pathways as teachers. The program encourages students, emphasizing a positive mind set toward becoming a teacher and providing students with appropriate skills to become successful in the teacher education program.

[9:22:13 AM](#)

DR. THOMAS responded that the path is very clear for those students interested in elementary education; however, for secondary education where a degree is earned in a specific field the availability varies, depending on the field. The university endeavors to make these fields available, he said.

[9:22:56 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS referred to the 70 percent of teachers being hired to teach in rural Alaska. She asked would it be helpful to cultivate opportunities in the village by mentoring with teachers, obtaining credits before leaving high school. She asked whether students can obtain teaching credentials via distance or on-line courses.

DR. CAULFIELD answered yes.

[9:24:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD expressed concern about the cost of education without the best outcomes. She asked whether any specific legislative support is needed to assist the university to help improve outcomes in the state.

DR. THOMAS answered he could not think of specific legislation; however, the ongoing report and interface with the Board of Regents is helpful. For example, bringing to the university's attention the need to assure interdisciplinary cross-functional thinking and analytical skills will be brought to the Academic Affairs Committee.

DR. THOMAS added that solving the broad band represents a basic infrastructure issue that requires attention. It has the potential to improve life in rural Alaska through a variety of means, such as telemedicine and e-commerce. He suggested that the legislature could support that effort, which is not limited to education, but to the quality of life.

[9:26:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON commented that there is a long lead time for broad band access for everyone. He hoped the university informs teachers. For example, the Homer school district went to an iPod touch program with applications (apps) that are all synched internally without using a lot of broad band access. The teaching is hands-on. Thus ways to obtain integrated technology can occur without awaiting broad band access. He suggested as the university considers the technology, the iPod touch is easily transported, which extends the school day by allowing students to do what they enjoy, such as taking photographs for reports. Certainly, he said he isn't opposed to white boards and other technology provided by broad band access, but in the meantime the university can strengthen its efforts in teacher education to use iPods or iPads since teachers can have access for less than the cost of a textbook for all of its students and still impose sufficient limits.

[9:29:17 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS thanked the participants.

[9:29:29 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees was adjourned at 9:29 a.m.