

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 20, 2013  
8:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Bert Stedman

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 40

"An Act making special appropriations for new engineering buildings for the University of Alaska in Anchorage and Fairbanks; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 40 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PRESENTATION: CENTER FOR ALASKA EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH-  
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA-ANCHORAGE

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 40

SHORT TITLE: APPROP: UNIV. ENGINEERING BUILDINGS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) ELLIS

01/28/13	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/28/13	(S)	EDC, FIN
02/06/13	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/06/13	(S)	Heard & Held
02/06/13	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MATTHEW MOSER, Staff  
Senator Johnny Ellis  
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Offered to answer questions related to SB 40 on behalf of the sponsor.

DR. DIANE HIRSHBERG, Director

University of Alaska-Anchorage (UAA) Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR)

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information about CAEPR.

DR. TERRI AKEY, Co-Director

Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (CREA)

Education Northwest

Portland, Oregon

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information about collaboration between CAEPR and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the legislature, and other educational entities.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:00:36 AM](#)

**CHAIR GARY STEVENS** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gardner, Huggins, Dunleavy, and Chair Stevens.

#### **SB 40-APPROP: UNIV. ENGINEERING BUILDINGS**

[8:00:53 AM](#)

**CHAIR STEVENS** announced that the first order of business would be SB 40, which makes appropriations for engineering facilities at the University of Alaska - Anchorage and Fairbanks. He noted it was the second hearing of SB 40 and his intention was to move the bill out of committee.

**SENATOR HUGGINS** [moved to adopt SB 40, labeled 28-LS0083\A, as the working document.]

**CHAIR STEVENS** objected for purposes of discussion.

[8:02:07 AM](#)

**MATTHEW MOSER**, Staff, Senator Johnny Ellis, offered to answer questions related to SB 40 on behalf of the sponsor.

**SENATOR HUGGINS** asked how many students were enrolled in the engineering programs in Anchorage and Fairbanks (UAA) and (UAF).

MR. MOSER replied that 1,137 students are enrolled at both campuses. He suggested Kit Duke might have the breakdown between the two campuses.

SENATOR GARDNER stated that present enrollment of engineering students is nearly 1,200 students at the University of Alaska.

[8:04:12 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS said the question remained about how many are enrolled in UAF.

CHAIR STEVENS said that information will be provided before the meeting ends. He asked if there was any public testimony. Seeing none, he closed public testimony.

[8:05:04 AM](#)

At ease

[8:08:08 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS brought the committee back to order.

MR. MOSER related that 60 percent of undergraduate engineering students attend UAF and 40 percent attend UAA; 682 at UAF and 454 at UAA.

SENATOR HUGGINS stated support for the development of the engineering program. He cautioned about future deficit spending.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY noted that university projects total over \$300 million. He said there would be further discussion of cost in the Senate Finance Committee. He agreed it will be difficult to fund every request.

[8:09:50 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS stated that this is the Education Committee whose goal it is to determine what is good for the students of Alaska. He said SB 40 represents a good project; however, whether it is affordable is another question.

SENATOR HUGGINS commented on declining oil production and the efforts to turn that around.

[8:11:00 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS removed his objection.

[8:11:18 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS moved to report SB 40 from committee with individual recommendations. There being no objection, the motion carried.

[8:11:53 AM](#)

At ease

**PRESENTATION: Center for Alaska Education Policy Research-  
University of Alaska-Anchorage**

[8:12:57 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced that he was pleased to have a presentation by people from the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR).

DR. DIANE HIRSHBERG, Director, University of Alaska-Anchorage (UAA) Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR), presented information about CAEPR. She related that CAEPR was founded by UAA in 2010 and used foundation money to get started. Last year the legislation appropriated funds for CAEPR to do research. In addition, CAEPR researches contracts and grants, such as those for the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER). The university recognized that there was no single place that policy makers could look to for information about policy issues.

DR. HIRSHBERG referred to information in committee members' packets about the program's core values and mission. She pointed out that CAEPR also provides "rapid response" research. Faculty has been funded at all three UA campuses in order to encourage more policy research. She said that CAEPR also collaborates with partners in the Lower 48 to ensure that their work is grounded in national research and current. She listed ways that CAEPR is trying to build its research capacity, such as mentoring undergraduate research.

[8:16:32 AM](#)

DR. HIRSHBERG addressed specific work CAEPR is doing under the legislative appropriation. She said the study of recent graduates of UA programs came from a question about why only 40 percent to 50 percent of teaching graduates were in the classroom after the first year. The conclusion was that the graduates are not necessarily mobile enough to move to open teaching jobs in rural communities. There also has not been much hiring in large districts and turnover has been low. She said that study was paid for out of UA foundation funds.

[8:18:01 AM](#)

She said CAEPR has been working on a State of the State project that was funded by the legislature. It involved compiling critical data from K-12 education in one place in order to facilitate decisions made by the legislature. That project should be completed by the end of March.

DR. HIRSHBERG reported that CAEPR is also engaged in a statewide survey of teachers to try to understand what is affecting their decisions to stay in or to leave teaching. The focus is primarily on rural Alaska and the cost of teacher turnover in six districts in the state.

She related that there will be an update on CAEPR's Supply and Demand Report, which is funded by UA K-12 outreach programs. Also, the Anchorage School District is funding research on how districts are spending their money and a comparison of investment and educational outcomes.

[8:21:54 AM](#)

She summarized other contracts and grants CAEPR is working on.

DR. HIRSHBERG reported that CAEPR is now working with the Alaska State Policy Research Alliance (ASPRA).

SENATOR GARDNER commented that she would look at school districts with the best educational outcomes in order to figure out what really works in a school district. She asked if that sort of analysis is being done.

DR. HIRSHBERG replied that CAEPR has not systematically looked at that issue. One of the goals regarding the research of how districts spend their money is to select rural districts that have higher student outcomes in order to examine the allocation of resources in those schools.

She said that CAEPR is at the point of refocusing its intent language for its goals for next year. She thought that Senator Gardner's suggestion could be included. She welcomed other suggestions by legislators, noting that Representative Austerman will be one of the key people involved in crafting intent language.

[8:24:30 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER asked what language would be changed.

DR. HIRSHBERG clarified that it is language that was intended to cast a wide net, but also had some underlying intent language which needs to be focused.

SENATOR HUGGINS opined that the current education system needs to be changed. He recalled when UAF lost its teacher certification. He used an Olympic analogy to explain that schools need to evolve.

[8:28:06 AM](#)

DR. HIRSHBERG explained that CAEPR is both examining the education system and looking at what is working elsewhere and has been proven to be more effective. She noted that Alaska is unique in its geography and in its challenges. She used Hawaii as an example of implementing innovative programs that address similar challenges.

SENATOR HUGGINS agreed with Dr. Hirshberg that the demographics in Alaska are unique. He suggested Alaska has to tailor its programs to its students.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Dr. Hirshberg for her presentation.

[8:31:41 AM](#)

DR. TERRI AKEY, Co-Director, Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (CREA), Education Northwest, presented information about collaboration between CAEPR, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the legislature, and other educational entities. She related that three years ago CREA began to collaborate with CAEPR on education policy. She said with the help of funding from Education Northwest they put together a project called the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Contract. There are 10 such Contracts around the country and the goal of the Contract is to provide assistance to states, districts, and schools around using evidence and building research and analytic capacity to use available data.

[8:33:37 AM](#)

DR. AKEY explained that CREA also administers the Comprehensive Center Contract, which provides support to DEED. She said through the REL contract CREA has the opportunity use the Research Alliance to help build capacity in the education field to use information and evidence and data to make good decisions. This is a shift from previous contracts that tended to be more external. Stakeholders meet together to request more information about an educational problem. She noted there are nine such alliances across the five-state region.

[8:35:02 AM](#)

DR. AKEY said that the alliance in Alaska is called the Alaska Statewide Education Policy Alliance. It is very unique and is broader than most, drawing in many entities that have a stake in education. It is in the second year of a five-year contract. The first year was spent in organizing the members and deciding upon the issues to address.

DR. AKEY explained that what emerged from the conversation was a focus on college and career readiness and post-secondary transitions for Alaska students, with a specific focus on Alaska Native Students. She said CREA, along with CAEPR, the Department of Labor (DOL), and Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education, is currently involved in a study that looks into where students go after high school; college, technical school, or career. A goal is to establish a definition of what college and career readiness is and develop indicators that can be used to track progress.

[8:38:00 AM](#)

DR. AKEY discussed the interaction of CREA with DOL in efforts to developing a capacity to answer educational research questions.

She said at the end of the five-year contract, CREA hopes to leave the state with a set of useful studies and to have a self-sustaining process in place. The goal is to develop a model of policy decision making in the education field that can continue to sustain itself with the systems that are in place in the state.

DR. AKEY summarized that Alaska's alliance is receiving attention at the national level. Recently, in a national meeting the commissioner of NCES, the Department of Education branch that hosts the program, called out the alliance as a good model.

[8:40:04 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS thanked the presenters.

SENATOR GARDNER asked Dr. Akey if there would be preliminary reports along the way.

DR. AKEY said yes. The report will be coming out in October. On-going reports will also be shared with Senator Stevens.

CHAIR STEVENS said he would distribute that information to the committee.

8:41:41 AM

There being no further business to come before the Senate Education Committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the meeting at 8:41 a.m.