

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 16, 2015

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Wes Keller, Chair
Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Representative Jim Colver
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Liz Vazquez
Representative Harriet Drummond

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Tammie Wilson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: PROGRAM PRIORITIZATION REPORT~ UNIVERSITY OF
ALASKA BOARD OF REGENTS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JYOTSNA "JO" HECKMAN, President
Board of Regents
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Assisted in the presentation of the Program
Prioritization Report, and responded to committee questions.

COURTNEY ENRIGHT, Regent
Student Board of Regents
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Assisted in the presentation of the Program Prioritization Report, and responded to committee questions.

MICHELLE RIZK
University of Alaska Budget Office
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Assisted in the presentation of the Program Prioritization Report, and responded to committee questions.

JOHN PUGH, Chancellor
University of Alaska Southeast
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Discussed program prioritization at the University of Alaska.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:48 AM](#)

CHAIR WES KELLER called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Reinbold, Colver, Seaton, Vazquez, Drummond, and Keller were present at the call to order. Representative Wilson was also in attendance.

CHAIR KELLER introduced three University of Alaska students.

[8:05:20 AM](#)

PRESENTATION: PROGRAM PRIORITIZATION REPORT, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA BOARD OF REGENTS

CHAIR KELLER advised that the Board of Regents is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature, and in turn the Board of Regents appoints the President of the University of Alaska (UA). He described this meeting as important in that there are four regents to be confirmed and the real drivers is that Alaska is in tight budget constraints. He said the role of the regents is oversight of the university system and thanked them. Tension, he noted, is due to the budget crisis and 10 percent decrease in the budget and pointed to the UA budget depicting a \$53 million increase which is a red flag especially since there was clear direction in last year's budget. He continued that the direction was that the UA provide a performance matrix of all degree programs in the context of the number of students and costs, including directing the UA to delete low priority programs. He pointed out that the legislature does not have control over line items of the

University's budget as it is the responsibility of the regents. He remarked that other red flags include: the 2008 Senate Bill 241 report on teacher training programs in the State of Alaska, the legislature advised there was not much change in the number of resident teachers in the universities, and the levels of salaries in that the first 60 are paid more than the governor, yet tuition is being raised.

[8:12:39 AM](#)

JYOTSNA "JO" HECKMAN, President, Board of Regents, University of Alaska, [Available for comments]

[8:13:01 AM](#)

COURTNEY ENRIGHT, Regent, Student Board of Regents, University of Alaska, [Available for comments]

[8:13:26 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN referred to the questions contained in the committee packet, labeled "Memo to Chair Jyostna Heckman, dated February 26, 1015," and said the school has grown tremendously since 1949. She pointed out that the Board of Regents saw the writing on the wall in FY14 and explained that the University prepares for the FY16 budget in FY14. The budget passed in January was prepared in 2014 and submitted to OMB in the fall of 2014. The oil prices dropped from September to December which is why the budget submitted is of concern, she noted.

[8:18:11 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER asked how the two year cycle works with the budget language last year, and whether it was prepared in FY14.

REGENT HECKMAN offered, for example, this year the instructions for FY17 budget will be received in May, 2015, for approval in June 2015. The statewide university campuses develop their budgets in July, 2015, and the universities submit their FY17 operating budget to the regents in August, 2015. As a body, the Board of Regents is very engaged in the process of budget preparation and presentment. In September-October, the operating, capital, and capital improvement plan are submitted to OMB. In November, she advised, the Board of Regents has a final opportunity to ask questions and approve the 2017 budget.

CHAIR KELLER referred to the budget language included last year and asked whether it impacts the current budget or whether the issue is disregarded until the next legislature.

[8:21:57 AM](#)

MICHELLE RIZK, University of Alaska Budget Office, responded that the budget language was incorporated into the FY16 budget process.

[8:21:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON referred to the December salary adjustments after knowing oil prices were dropping and asked why the budget would then come in with a two percent increase for the next three years.

REGENT HECKMAN deferred to Ms. Rizk.

MS. RIZK assumed this question was referring to the union contracts recently approved. That process began before December and the Board of Regents decided to follow through with the commitment of negotiating that contract in that contracts were approved for all of their unions. Depending upon what the state decides to do, all of those contracts can be dealt with all at once.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON surmised that the UA would be open to the discussion of renegotiating all of their contract at a level better reflecting the oil prices.

MS. RIZK replied that the UA does not want to be treated any differently than state agencies and it is open for discussion.

[8:24:13 AM](#)

REGENT ENRIGHT added that the UA honors the needs and concerns of all of its employees and prefers to deal with an issue at an all-union basis.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON pointed out that the UA received higher than most state contracts as none of them received a two percent increase, and opined that students are first and yet increased tuition. She asked whether the UA will move forward with FY17 versus revisiting areas for which it does not have funding.

[8:25:48 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN responded that they are currently reviewing all options are where changes can be made, what can be let go, and what can they realign to help them make the budget decrement to. She opined that the UA will not move on and advised there was a special budget meeting where all options were reviewed as everything is on the table. She said, they realize the seriousness of this and have been putting in time, energy, and effort to do the things necessary to meet the budget decrement and they have not forgotten that FY16 is in front of them.

[8:27:43 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER said the regents have not been called to be on the hot seat as their concern is the danger of a compliant Board of Regents.

REGENT HECKMAN offered that the regents are actively dedicated and engaged in the administration and budget process.

[8:29:24 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER referred to a written responses, page 2, wherein Regent Heckman used a CUPA-HR in setting the salaries for officers and senior administrators and asked the rough number of people included in using this benchmark tool. He asked whether the Board of Regents are involved in addressing the increments that go above or beyond the CUPA-HR.

[8:30:58 AM](#)

REGENT ENRIGHT responded that there are approximately 116 senior administrators and officers system wide.

[8:31:04 AM](#)

MS. RIZK added that the officers of the UA are outlined in policy and the Board of Regents approves each of those positions.

MS. RIZK referred to the topic of revisiting the budget, the Board of Regents involvement, and tuition and advised that in September the Board of Regents did not approve the tuition increase that administration brought forward based on a variety of factors, including the financial change for the state. She said a revised proposal was offered in February related to

tuition and Regent Enright could discuss why that decision was made.

[8:33:06 AM](#)

REGENT ENRIGHT explained that many options were considered and providing affordable tuition to students is an important mandate and that she called all 15 of the campuses as to what the tuition increase would impact. The responding 11 campuses agreed with the need to increase tuition acknowledging there is a fiscal situation with the UA and Alaska and the February revised proposal increased tuition more than the September original proposal, she explained.

[8:34:06 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN added that during the February board meeting not one student testified against the tuition increase and she remarked that the students understand the fiscal situation at the UA and "did not feel this was a big deal to them."

[8:35:31 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER acknowledged that each of the regents have more information on this and are accomplished on the pertinent topics.

[8:36:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON surmised that the Board of Regents has had one and one-half years to generate a budget and they will adjust that budget based on legislative appropriations. The University did not change their budget proposal at the last minute but will have to make changes based upon appropriations, he said.

MS. RIZK pointed out that a challenge is meeting the state's budget guidelines for budget submission in that it must be turned into OMB when it is approved in November. During the June meeting the Board of Regents will approve the distribution of those funds by campus.

CHAIR KELLER moved to the program prioritization issue as within the budget language last year there was should have been a performance designator for each degree program as to the number of students, whether employers in Alaska are looking at the degrees, and cutting out some programs at a time of budget crisis rather than harming the UA by performing cuts everywhere.

He continued that the language also required information regarding graduates, what kind of a debt load they experienced when leaving the UA, how many went into their field, and how many are working.

[8:39:40 AM](#)

JOHN PUGH, Chancellor, University of Alaska Southeast, described the program prioritization process as the overarching strategic priorities the Board of Regents has adopted in shaping Alaska's future. "Shaping Alaska's Future" and the goals contained within are the first step in program prioritization, he offered, and secondly are the three accredited public universities: Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Southeast. He explained that as part of Northwest Commission accreditation, they are required in the process to prepare a strategic plan and set core themes that are the prioritization of the UA's plans. Out of those core themes, he noted, there must be strategies of how to reach those themes and the specific outcomes. He pointed out that the three universities have gone through the first process and are in the second round each with different years of that accreditation through the seven year accreditation process, of which the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) is in its fifth year. He referred to the specific programs under the core themes, for example, students services advising is a very important piece of student services in terms of an area focused on throughout the system. In order to improve the particular outcomes with freshman students, there are mandatory advising programs across the system and have seen a significant increase in retention rates as a result. It is the plan of the three universities to meet the student as a freshman and provide support services, advising and counselling, he remarked.

[8:43:28 AM](#)

CHANCELLOR PUGH continued that the second piece is when students pick a degree program and the focus is on high need jobs in Alaska and most of the degree programs are connected to the Department of Labor's high need jobs, of which 85 percent of UAS graduates are in high need jobs. UAS has a strong mining training center and both of the mines in Juneau depend on UAS to provide initial training as well as to upgrade their workforce in that area. He explained that the third piece in UAS is health care and the need for jobs throughout Southeast, of which a number of UAS programs fit into that area. He explained that the UA is informed by information from its economic development councils throughout, and the Department of Labor, however, it

takes time to respond to emerging needs and adjust programs. The University of Anchorage (UAA) prioritized all of its programs and have 70 programs on the list to perform a special program review and determine whether the programs should be deleted, he indicated. Fairbanks and Juneau both have prioritization processes such as committees, program reviews academically and within support functions, for example, the Bill Ray Center was sold in response to Juneau's needs, together with closure of the book store and other actions recently occurred to enact efficiencies. He put forward that special reviews are considering library resources, which also operates as a public library, and the question of how much of a public library and academic library should UAS be through the process of reduction. On the academic side, online courses are replacing some on campus classes, but it is not easy to go through all of the 50 programs as UAS does not have the resources to review them in one year, which is the same for Fairbanks and Anchorage, he underscored.

[8:49:23 AM](#)

CHANCELLOR PUGH continued that science and engineering priorities are at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and is described as a Research 1 University as one of the top 10 universities of its size in research in the country, \$125 million of research and primarily Arctic research is seen as the top Arctic research university in the world. He said that rural campuses have been a leader in Alaska Native language and culture programs. The Anchorage campus focused on health sciences for a number of years and most of their resources have gone into developing excellent health science programs and have one of the top 10 nursing programs in America with a mixture of e-learning and on site supervision. Its second focus is in the area of business with the banking industry and economics, and it has a highly touted experimental economics program and a Nobel Peace prize winner started the program. UAA has prioritized teacher education as it has the largest school district in the state. He explained that UAS has a very strong teacher education program with e-learning all over the state which includes principal and superintendent programs. Chancellor Pugh advised that UAS has provided undergraduate business programs via e-learning for a number of years which is quite popular as there is a high need for accountants in Alaska. With the environment in Southeast, marine biology is a natural and the most successful program in recruiting students from within and outside Alaska. The UAS focuses on each community's need in their workforce, with Ketchikan it is marine operations as it

has a shipyard with the ferries, Sitka is law enforcement as the trooper academy is there, and Juneau is primarily a mine training center, he explained.

[8:54:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON referred to the accreditation portion and ask why so much time is spent doing three separate accreditations versus one.

CHANCELLOR PUGH explained that geography plays a role and each campus has an independent focus, as well as regional needs, requiring the accreditation be separate. The accreditation calls Anchorage and Juneau comprehensive regional universities as their purpose is to serve the region they are in as well as other areas in the state. He offered that it would be difficult to have a single accredited university as, for example, Wyoming has a single university but has a multiple system including community college and technical system throughout Wyoming.

[8:56:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said that the university is meant for Alaska's children to be educated in high needs jobs, and she sees duplication going on not just the three universities but with other parts of the campuses and training schools outside of the university. She said she is missing why there couldn't be one accreditation and focus on each area of education rather than three, and the difficulty in transferring credits within the system.

CHANCELLOR PUGH explained that Fairbanks has doctoral programming and recently Anchorage offers doctorate nursing, but it is difficult to think about a doctoral university such as Fairbanks somehow with all of the other 15 campuses being folded into a single accreditation. He advised it not something that is done in the accreditation system throughout the United States and there is a question as to whether it could be administered in a single unit. In 1986 the Board of Regents decided to fold the community college system into the university system and having been through that process that was very difficult and took 10-15 years to get close to integrating those in, he offered.

[8:59:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked whether digital learning is more or less expensive.

CHANCELLOR PUGH responded that it can be more efficient and expensive, for example, currently there are areas that do not have bandwidth which enables a student access to digital learning. He explained that an efficient model requires enlarging classes to a significant amount, which is what some of the profit making organizations universities have done that and it can get to an efficiency model, but whether the quality is the same is a question and faculty has been reluctant to have enormously large classes in the digital area.

[9:01:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD advised she is not recommending digital learning as nothing replaces a teacher in a classroom; however, the concern is UA's budget. She described the UA system as very top heavy on administration across the board of the universities and the state does not have the \$400 million to give any longer. She asked the plan for the universities.

CHANCELLOR PUGH replied that starting from Governor Walker's budget to the House budget, UAS has a budget and planning committee and has been looking at the areas to reduce or be more efficient such as, selling three different buildings and collapsing those to do more with less in terms of a physical size. He advised that UAS has had five straight years of no utility increases because the efficiencies work with its buildings and each building sold allowed UAS to reduce its operating cost by \$300-500 thousand. A program eliminate last year was the UAS pre-engineering program as there were not enough students, which allows people to do their first year and then transfer to Anchorage and Fairbanks, which will save UAS \$150,000 thousand, the early childhood program and two faculty were eliminated, and an MBA program. He remarked the plan is to cut programs and eliminate staff and faculty, including a review of eliminating one Vice-Chancellor and one Vice-Provost, as statewide is looking to reduce management, campuses will not be closed, but efficiencies are being pursued.

[9:04:47 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN added that a single answer will not suffice, they are re-allocating resources, space utilization, long term facility management, controlling energy expense, system level collaborations, reviewing programs and positions, enrolling and

retaining more students, commercialization as at UAA and UAF campuses have increased research which could provide economic value from the university's intellectual properties with new inventions and patents that could be leveraged through to provide some benefit to the university as well as the state. She stated that many avenues exist and each is being scrutinized while preserving the core quality of the university so when the budget deficit is over the UA will emerge with something it can hang onto and maintain a high quality university. The University of Alaska understands this is a 2016-2019 issue, she said.

CHAIR KELLER commented that the Board of Regents are charged with making prioritizations, and the choices cannot be easy. He expressed that the point of this meeting is whether the state is receiving "the bang for the buck" and the Board of Regents must have the answer.

[9:09:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER referred to the committee handout, page 2, labeled "UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS PRIORITIES and PROGRAM REVIEWS," in which there are a number of career pathways slated to be cut where there is a high demand in the private sector such as, dental assistant, dental hygiene, drafting technology, and instrumentation technology. He offered concern as to how the UA will provide for the high demand career pathways if it is reducing these programs. He asked whether other programs are offered in these disciplines.

REGENT HECKMAN explained that the program reviews and priorities are continuing and there is a process of programing elimination or deletion. The Program Reviewing Committee has a certain set of criteria that puts these programs on a review list and it is unknown whether they will be deleted, the decision is made based upon the number of students in the program, faculty that can teach those programs, or interest in the program. She said the regents review it through its Academic and Student Affairs Committee and offer a deletion of the program. Currently the programs mentioned are on the program review list but it does not mean that they are going to be deleted or eliminated.

[9:11:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER asked whether the UAF campus would get back to the committee on this assessment including how the career pathways will be filled as these are job ready

disciplines with jobs in high demand. He described that the mission is to offer programs for students so they can move directly into a job.

[9:12:39 AM](#)

CHANCELLOR PUGH advised that the 3 campuses operate together and each deletion goes through that and reviews what is offered at other campuses. For example, the dental hygiene program has been offered for many years in the Anchorage area, and the goal is to determine whether a class can be offered at one campus and serve the state, he explained. The programs that require hands-on experience are hard to do except at a local area, especially given the geographic size of the state, he emphasized.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER observed that CAD drafters can work online as the demand in the industry is high, and he looks forward to the response.

[9:14:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD noted that the University of Alaska's budget is approaching \$1 billion and asked "where does the buck stop," with the president and chancellors or stop with the Board of Regents. She expressed that during the past two years a plan was requested, and stated there were seven silos where money went and she had recommended one to offer more flexibility so UA could put a plan in place.

She pointed out that UA is a land-grant college that apparently did not receive all the land, but with the land it has how it could be monetized and more self-sufficient. President Patrick Gamble previously testified that his number one issue is personnel costs in order for the university to become more self-sufficient and she requested a plan to address personnel costs. She opined to keep as many faculty that are teaching classes and eliminating unnecessary administration. She inquired as to whether Eagle River is an official campus but heard it is in the black as it uses the high school, the parking lots are already cleared, and the lights and building are already there. She questioned why this model is not being used in outlying areas. She requested information as to why a travel freeze has not been implemented.

[9:16:33 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN advised that the buck stops with the Board of Regents, as holders of the oversight responsibility, and they run the University of Alaska through President Gamble. He, in turn, manages and runs the university for the regents through oversight of the 3 campuses and other smaller campuses, she explained. The buck stops with the Board of Regents regarding the budget and during the June meeting is advised of the final numbers from the legislature, it then appropriates the money to different campuses in whatever proportions necessary for each administrative unit. She said that during their recent budget meeting they considered reducing the number of administrative positions and reviewed different models within the UA system and separately accredited universities and how many people does it take to run that model. She pointed out that the UA system has some research faculty that brings in funds that goes to the type of research they perform and are self-sufficient for themselves, the programs, and their staff. She indicated that programs not on the program review list will retain the faculty if it is in the university's best interest in that their goal is to right size the university system and retain the high quality, high performance, and high demand programs. She explained that the purpose of the program prioritization and review is to consider what can be carried by specific campuses as the university can no longer respond to every need in every area, as was once the effort. Programs are being consolidated and focused on by a single campus. She said she could not answer Representative Reinbold's question regarding Eagle River.

[9:20:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked what the university can do with the land it does have to monetize it and move forward to be more self-sufficient.

REGENT HECKMAN answered that the university has a facilities plan and did not know if it had a land plan, but she can definitely review it and get back to her.

[9:21:16 AM](#)

MS. RIZK referred to the sovereign plan President Gamble discussed last year with Representative Reinbold related to land and there is draft legislation for the land grant equivalency that does look at land for the University of Alaska and how to receive additional revenue through that process into the future.

CHANCELLOR PUGH said there is an annual land grant program that reviews what is being sold and leased, but the problem is that the university doesn't have many acres and opined that the land office in recent years has done an excellent job trying to develop the lands it does have. He offered that in the past their focus has been timber cutting plans that is not an enormous amount of money and noted the natural resource plan is \$200 million and spins off each year somewhere in the neighborhood of \$8-10 million which is used for the Alaska scholars program and land grant research pieces.

[9:23:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD continued to request information regarding the Eagle River campus, the number of acres in the UA's possession, and a travel freeze.

MS. RIZK responded that a travel freeze has not been implemented but is "getting chilled very quickly" as last year the legislature reduced travel by over \$1 million and the total travel budget is approximately \$20 million, and half is restricted travel meaning it comes from federal researcher performing research. Through the reductions from the legislature they have focused on reducing travel and implementing audio conferencing, the Board of Regent trips have much limited staff, and legislative meetings to the degree possible are pairing them together, but travel has not been frozen. They have athletic teams required to travel and are reviewing that issue but it will take time to determine how to do things differently as they cannot do an all-out freeze.

CHANCELLOR PUGH advised the number of acres including the plan for disposal will be provided.

[9:25:36 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER offered that if the witnesses have further input to answer various questions to please send it to him before the confirmation hearings.

[9:26:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VAZQUEZ requested a report on the acres of lands, how they are broken down, the plan for use and monetization, and the person primarily responsible. She offered that Stanford has been successful with property monetization and mentioned that the American Public University is a small institution compared

to the University of Alaska system which quite aggressive in monetizing the little land they own. She recalled that over \$300 million was allocated for a power plant for UAF and requested the status of the power plant.

MS. RIZK responded she would provide a written response.

[9:28:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VAZQUEZ referred to a line indicating the mental health authority funds and asked what the funds are used for.

CHANCELLOR PUGH replied [technical difficulties] the authority often times matches program funding at the university, for example, the mental health trust authority was very interested in getting UA's doctorate in psychology started in the state and match the program before that, and other programs for disability services and other areas in the mental health services. He explained that early on the mental health trust was involved in the development of masters in social work, and in any given year there will be 2-3 items in the university's budget including mental health trust funds as matching.

[9:29:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VAZQUEZ asked for a breakdown by geographic location of the administrators and staff, as well as a specific detailed breakdown of travel expenditures, a geographic breakdown of the areas of majors and minors offered in each campus, including student enrollment for the past two years in each of the programs by geographic location.

MS. RIZK advised that the university has over 500 programs across the system from certificate up to PhD levels and was trying to decide how best to give it to the committee without 35 pages worth of data.

REPRESENTATIVE VAZQUEZ indicated with regard to the Anchorage campus she suggested an Attachment A with a list of all the majors and minors and other certification programs.

CHAIR KELLER explained that online the university has an organization chart for all three campuses.

[9:31:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON stated the report can be 35 pages in order for the legislature to understand what is happening in all of the campuses, and it could be offered digitally.

CHAIR KELLER responded that the legislature can come back and revisit these issues at a later time as the Board of Regents will be here for confirmation and the upcoming bill.

[9:33:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that the details being requested may be included in the resources available, such as "Shaping Alaska's Future." He suggested a honing of the questions being posed.

CHAIR KELLER said that the committee is asking specific questions and if the information is contained in "Shaping Alaska's Future" to make reference to it.

[9:35:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON reviewed the need for information on the individual campus programs.

CHAIR KELLER pointed out that the broad question is whether programs are effective.

[9:37:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND indicated she was not sure she wanted all that level of detail particularly since the legislature does not have line item veto authority. She referred to Chancellor Pugh's statement that the UAS campus cut early childhood masters degrees and, in that she does not agree with the House budget eliminating all early childhood programs from the Department of Education, asked how the university would handle such a signal from the legislature in that it is choosing to eliminate all early childhood programs in light of two early childhood masters programs at UAA and UAF.

CHANCELLOR PUGH replied that years ago UAS reviewed early childhood programs because districts were not hiring people with early childhood degrees as they were not required, therefore, students wouldn't go into those programs because they couldn't get jobs when they graduated. He said the outcome will depend upon the student body and whether districts are hiring graduates. In the event districts decide to hire teachers,

particularly PreK-3, the university will continue the programs as long as the numbers are there. He advised that when the districts decided to not hire individuals with early childhood education they changed the program to include PreK-5 with some early childhood courses in order for people to be [indisc.]. He opined that he looks at the market and determines what principals and superintendents are looking for in terms of hiring individuals which drives the programs offered. Which, he remarked, is true of any decisions made to make shifts in that prioritization at the state level does shift the economy of districts and the market and UA responds to that market. He would like UAS to respond more quickly as it is smaller with fewer layers to go through but it is getting better at turning faster, he related.

[9:41:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that the committee received presentations from each of the three universities, and using UAF as an example, has 42 programs they are evaluating for elimination. Yet, he pointed out, the committee request is to receive a report regarding all of the programs offered thereby not relying upon their expertise to have identified 42 programs. He opined that the committee is requesting the university to give the committee a digital dump of all the courses they operate, but he was not sure why because they were asked to prioritize and complied, and now the committee is questioning its prioritization. He asked whether the committee is asking the UA to have some different parameter under which to prioritize the 42 masters and certificated programs and Bachelors of Art, Bachelors of Science programs should be evaluated. He then questioned the appropriateness and whether the committee should delve into the detail that has been entrusted to the Board of Regents as the university came forward with prioritizing programs as was requested.

CHAIR KELLER responded that the documents do not make sense to him as he does not see a real prioritization and his suspicions are that the product is not yet completed, although it was requested a year ago. He said he heard that UAA eliminated its Masters of Chemistry degree and can't imagine it not being hugely employable.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that Chair Keller's response gives the university definition to the question.

CHAIR KELLER reiterated that the context of this meeting is to call attention to whether programs are needed or not, which is the responsibility of the Board of Regents more so than the responsibility of the legislature. He explained the legislature wants to find comfort in the actions of the Board of Regents.

9:46:15 AM

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said that the university is looking at their own programs within their own system and not tasked to review the world and a consideration may be to allocate in a different method to the university system. She questioned the duplication with state funding, not just the university but with training schools, K-12 programs and whether programs should be combined. She expressed concern that 9.2 million has been provided to build a locker room so these individual expenditures are questionable and confidence must be provided through further information. She said her desire is to understand the basics of what the university is offering and possibly send students to other universities to help finish their degrees versus trying to do it with just that amount. The legislature is tasked with the bigger picture of what else is going on in the state and asked whether the state is interfering with private training schools. She described the information the committee is seeking as invaluable.

9:50:14 AM

CHANCELLOR PUGH answered that he does not object to preparing programs by geographic location and enrollments, but an important perspective is what the campuses at Sitka and Ketchikan do for their communities, surrounding areas, and workforce is amazing. Within the university system there is quite a bit of distance education, for example, within UAS 53 percent of its headcount and close to 50 percent of credit hours are e-learning credit hours and there are individuals all over the state taking courses. He said that you will see in enrollments isn't necessarily in that region because the entire state is being served as UAS has 129 programs that are distance delivered in the University of Alaska system. He referred to the students that earlier identified themselves and commented that this is Spring Break and they took their time off to be down here to put a face on the University of Alaska. He advised that Alaska is the only state where the student regent has full powers so the students have a voice.

9:52:51 AM

MS. RIZK wrapped-up with comments for continued success of the university. She said that transfer issues are a priority for the Board of Regents and to send all constituent comments to her. She added that transfers do not count toward the degree as it is considered an elective.

[9:54:04 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN pointed out that there are 54 school districts and are challenged with whether the students are college ready and if the students are not college ready they spend time getting them college ready and are chastised because it took six years for them to graduate. Open admission is part of a larger discussion, but the issue of duplication of programs is exactly what the prioritization process will address thereby creating efficiency in the system. She commented that the university has title to approximately 145,600 acres of land, educational property is approximately 12,000 acres, and investment property is approximately 133,000 acres. She commented that in two years UA will celebrate its 100th birthday, and it is important to keep it strong into the future. She reported in 2014 there were a record number of degree certificates and licensures with a 31 percent increase in annual awards compared to 2010, and more high demand job areas degrees awarded. For example, she remarked, UAA awarded 180 plus Baccalaureate Engineering degrees, approximately 1,000 degree certificates in health, occupational endorsements in health related programs, and approximately 550 degree certificates and endorsements in teacher education programs.

[9:58:20 AM](#)

REGENT HECKMAN continued that the university has expanded the e-learning course delivery to 129 programs and would like to provide as many offerings as possible. Many programs are 100 percent available by e-learning with a 38 percent increase in e-learning credits, and approximately one-third of the students are enrolled through e-learning environment at multiple campuses, she explained. When discussing Alaska schools and private industry, the university is increasing Alaska-related research and intellectual property. She advised the goal is to remove all barriers to student success and provide seamless learning opportunities.

[10:01:14 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:01 a.m.